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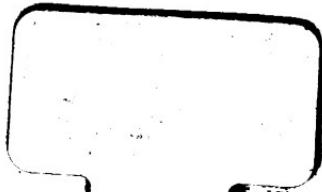
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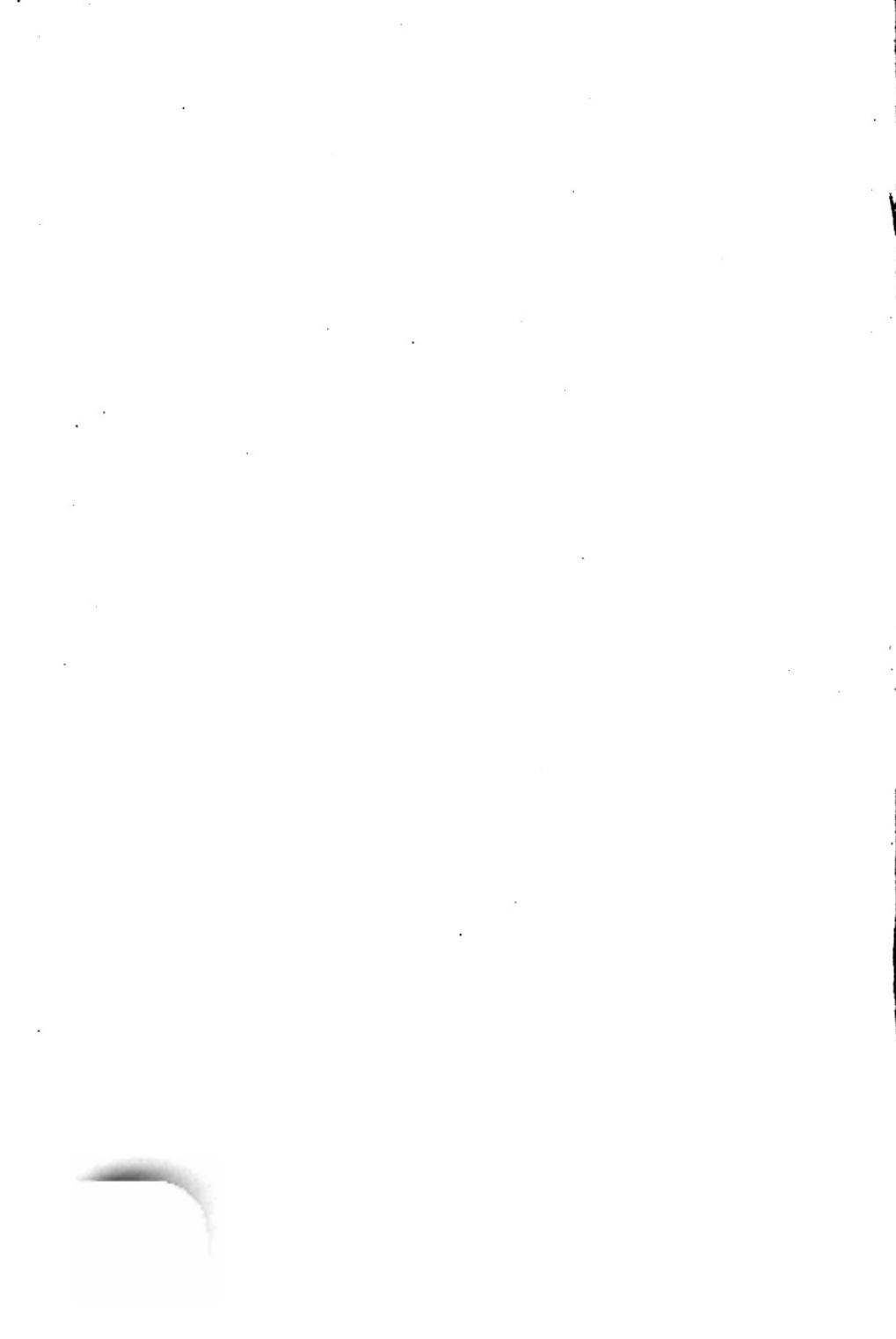
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**OUR JIM; OR, THE POWER OF
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OUR JIM.

OUR JIM

OR,

THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

BY

EDWARD S. ELLIS, A. M.

X

AUTHOR OF

"DORSEY, THE YOUNG INVENTOR," "THE PEOPLE'S
STANDARD HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES,"
"HISTORY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK,"
"TALES TOLD OUT OF SCHOOL,"
"DEERFOOT SERIES," ETC.

I shall pass through this world but once :
Any good thing, therefore, that I can do,
Or any kindness that I can show
To any human being, let me do it now ;
Let me not defer or neglect it,
For I shall not pass this way again.

— ANON.

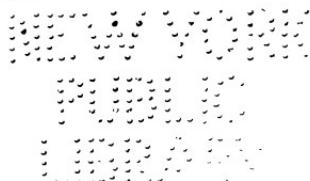


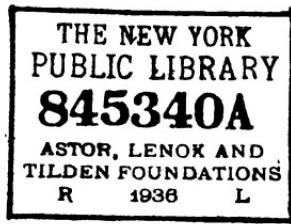
BOSTON
DANA ESTES & COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

[1901]

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Colonial Press

Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THREE BAD BOYS	11
II.	THE RAID THAT FAILED	23
III.	SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES	33
IV.	BEFORE JUSTICE LAWTON	43
V.	THE HEARING	54
VI.	A SCHEME THAT FAILED TO WORK	64
VII.	AN HONEST OPINION	77
VIII.	A STRANGE SITUATION	85
IX.	THE VIRTUE OF "SOAKERS"	95
X.	THE MYSTERY SOLVED	106
XI.	WHAT BEFELL DICK AND JO	115
XII.	A TRIFLE THAT MEANT A GREAT DEAL	125
XIII.	FOR TRUTH'S SAKE	140
XIV.	THE NEXT DAY	149
XV.	"SLIDE, JIM! SLIDE!"	156
XVI.	HONESTLY WON	164
XVII.	NOW FOR COLLEGE	173
XVIII.	COLLEGE DAYS	184
XIX.	A BUSINESS PROPOSITION	196
XX.	GRAND WORK	205
XXI.	WOOING AND WINNING	217
XXII.	AN UNEXPECTED HONOUR	229
XXIII.	ON THE STUMP	241
XXIV.	DANGER IN THE AIR	248

Johnson 23 Mar '35

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXV.	A THREAT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES	255
XXVI.	THE MAKING OF LAWS	264
XXVII.	JIM'S SECOND TERM	276
XXVIII.	SEED AND FRUIT	285
XXIX.	TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR THE WINK OF AN EYE	298
XXX.	AN APPLE OF GOLD IN A PICTURE OF SILVER	307
XXXI.	THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER	317

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<small>PAGE</small>
OUR JIM	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"JIM STEADILY GAINED, AND KNEW THE GAME WAS HIS"	30
"UNCLE MIKE SLOWLY RESUMED HIS PLODDING HOMeward"	98
"'I WILL TAKE THEIR PUNISHMENT'"	146
"THEN HE HELD IT ALOFT, AND SHOUTED HIS APPEAL TO THE UMPIRE"	164
"'I THANK YOU, GENTLEMEN, I NEVER SMOKE OR DRINK'"	200
"'I PROPOSE THREE CHEERS FOR JIM WINTERS!'"	243
"'WE ARE PREPARED TO GIVE YOU TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS'"	302



OUR JIM; OR, THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

CHAPTER I.

THREE BAD BOYS

THE village of Arundale had a Mystery.

And in order that you should understand the strange series of events in the history of that place, I must tell you about the incidents that gave rise to the mystery.

Arundale, as I have just said, was a village, and its importance was due mainly to the fact that it was the seat of the Arundale Woollen Mills, of which the wealthy Elijah Michener was the owner. His home was near the centre of the village, and was the finest for miles around. Its broad grounds, winding gravelled walks, shade-trees, shrubbery, and flowers almost hid the mansion itself from view to those who walked or rode past in the dusty highway.

Mr. Michener lived in New York City during the winter, but made his home at Arundale in the late spring, summer and autumn. His family consisted of his wife, a grown-up son, Elijah, who gave his attention to the mills, with a view to succeeding his father in their management, a second son, George, who was at Yale, and a third, Harry, some fourteen years old, who was so fond of the free, outdoor life at Arundale that he sometimes spent a portion of his winters there. I shall have considerable to tell you about this young man, for it so happened that he had much to do with the development of the mystery.

Harry had two companions of about the same age, whose disposition was much the same. They were Washington Philbrick, generally called by his pet name, "Washy," and Walter Hodgkins. I am grieved to say I have little good to record of any of this trio, for they were "smart," disrespectful, fond of mean, malicious mischief, who liked to steal and do wrong, simply because it was wrong, bullied those who were younger than they, and, to cap the climax, every one of them smoked cigarettes.

It is wonderful how much harm one bad boy can do in a community, and when three of them join in their wicked doings, great evil is sure to follow. It may be said of them that they are so much leaven which "leavens the whole lump."

Although the lads I have named were on the list of pupils who attended the public school of Arundale, they often played truant, annoyed the smaller boys, were backward in their lessons, and caused their teacher no end of trouble. The worst of it all was that the fathers of Harry Michener and of Washy Philbrick were trustees, the third being powerless, since he was not only in the minority, but was a weak, negative man, who never had the courage to oppose the wishes of his associates.

Messrs. Michener and Philbrick belonged to that endless list of parents who can never see any wrong in their children. When word reached them of some viciousness on the part of their sons, they waved it airily aside with the remark, "Boys will be boys," and probably called up some similar doings of their own, when they were young, and laughed with great glee, as if it were something of which they ought to be proud.

Inasmuch as the instructor owed his situation to these two trustees, and he knew that any vigorous discipline on his part would cause him to lose his place, little or nothing was to be expected from him in the way of reforming the lads, who at times became pests in the neighbourhood.

So much for the present about them. A little way out of the village lived another person, who had still more to do with the mystery than any one of the boys.

He was Michael Doland, a man more than seventy years old, with bowed form and laggard gait, like one who felt the weight of his age. He and his equally aged wife lived alone in a small house by the roadside, where an acre of ground was so carefully tilled that the truck not only provided most of the food for the table, but brought the old couple a tidy sum from the sales to the villagers, for no vegetables were crisper, juicier, and more tempting than Uncle Michael's. They had chickens and a cow, and remembering their simple wants, and the fact that their only son, who had good employment elsewhere, never failed to send them a liberal part of his earnings, it will be seen that Michael and his wife had no cause for envying any person in the world.

And they would have been happy and content in their quiet way, but for the "gang," composed of Harry Michener, Washy Philbrick, and Walter Hodgkins. Simply because the couple had no way of protecting themselves against their meanness, the young scamps often made life a burden to them. By breaking off a paling at the rear of the garden, they could sneak through, steal a lot of berries, trample tender vegetables under foot, uproot others, and slip away again without any one suspecting their presence.

When this had been done several times, Uncle Michael went to the office of the proprietor of

the Arundale Woollen Mills with his complaint. Mr. Michener and his eldest son were there, and listened to the simple story. When it was concluded, Mr. Michener asked, in his brisk, curt fashion :

“ Well, Uncle Michael, what have *I* to do with all this rigmarole ? ”

“ Ain’t ye the father of your son, Masther Harry ? ”

“ Such undoubtedly is the fact.”

“ Well, it was him as was the ringleader of the spalpaans — bad cess to them ! ”

“ Did you *see* him in your truck patch ? ” asked Mr. Michener.

“ No, but I seen his footprints.”

“ How do you know they were his ? ”

“ Arrah, now, whose ilse would they be ? ” demanded the Irishman, fast losing his temper under the sarcastic prodding of the proprietor ; “ isn’t that son of yours the worst blackguard in the countrry ? If he had his disserts wouldn’t he be in the pinitinchiary, where he’s fast drifting — ”

“ There ! that will do,” interrupted Elijah Michener, junior, stepping hastily forward and grasping the arm of the old man ; “ if it wasn’t for your years I’d kick you off the premises ! Now,” he added, opening the door and showing the weakly resisting man through, “ don’t show yourself here again.”

Uncle Michael's vigorous treatment dazed him for a few minutes after reaching the cool air on the outside, but when he could pull himself together he made his way to the village store kept by Mr. Philbrick, where his complaint was equally emphatic, and, I am sorry to say, his treatment rougher than that at the office of the Arundale Woollen Mills. When Mr. Philbrick heard his own "Washy" called a scamp and spalpeen he literally flung the old man out-of-doors and off the stoop. He fell on his hands and knees, and, picking up his hat and cane, he was obliged to lean more heavily on it than usual as he plodded his way homeward.

Being an Irishman, Uncle Michael had a temper of his own, and when he told his story to his wife she fully shared in his indignation.

"Perhaps, Mike," she said, "ye were not quite as gintaal in your remarks regardin' thim spalpaans, but ye told the thruth, and that's a consolation."

"Consolation!" sniffed the husband, "where's the consolation whin no one else belaves me, and the vigitables are deshtroyed?"

"Your conscience, Mike,—do ye forgit *that?* Av coorse we can't git the vigitables back that the spalpaans ruined, but mebbe *they'll come agin!*"

There was a significance in the last words which

caused the husband to look keenly across the table where they were seated at their evening meal.

"Yes, Mike," she repeated, with a meaning smile, "knowin' that their parents—bad luck to them!—will stand by him, *they'll come agin!* And be the same towken where will *we* be whin they arrive?"

"Ah, Bridget," said the husband, admiringly, "ye have a head on ye like a tack. It's mesilf that would niver have thought of all the sinse that has flashed into you, the minute I told me shitory."

"Do ye mind that buckthorn cane that ye carries,—the one that yer Uncle Patrick sint ye from the owld sod?"

"It's me bist friend."

"And it's the foينest shillaleh in the world, and what bitter sarvice can it give than breakin' the heads of the thaves that we catch in our garden?"

Uncle Michael smiled and nodded in a way that showed he was immensely pleased. Suddenly he became serious.

"Have ye forgot, Bridget, that I have to be away now and thin?"

"And when ye're away, where am *I*? Can't I kaap as shtrict a watch as ye and shtrike as hard a whack?"

"Ye kin! ye kin! I kin sartify to the same," replied the husband, rubbing his head in a remi-

niscent way, "but whin I go to the village I naad the buckthorn."

The wife pointed to the corner of the room where a stout hickory cane leaned.

"Have ye forgotten that which ye used till ye resaved the buckthorn from your Uncle Patrick? Do I want anything betther than the same?"

"Ah, Bridget, it's ye that are the jewel! I'm thinking of writing to Mike (the absent son) and asking him to sind me a dog as big as a horse, that he may watch the thruck whin we're aslaap."

"Have done wid yer nonsinse! Nothing less than a tiger or lion would do for thim spalpaans, and we should lose — don't ye saa? — the plisure of walluping thim ourselves?"

"I lave it all to ye, — but whin will they show themselves agin?"

"Arrah, if we only knowed that, but we must watch and be ready for thim."

Thus the situation changed, for, whereas the couple had dreaded a visit from the youthful raiders, their wish now was that they should not delay their coming. Buckthorn in hand, Uncle Michael slipped out to the rear of the garden, where he had renailed the paling in place. In order to tempt the scamps, he loosened the fastenings, so that it could be readily removed without noise, and then cautiously hid himself among some dense currant bushes and waited.

Several times he was roused to expectancy by a slight rustling outside, and he grasped his weapon more firmly and was on the alert ; but the faint noise was caused by the wind, and he sank back to wait and watch, until at a late hour he made his way to the house, disappointed, but hopeful of results on the morrow.

After Elijah Michener, junior, had shown Uncle Michael to the door of his office, and forbidden him to return, he rejoined his father, who said :

“ You did right, my son, and I must compliment you on your self-restraint ; when I heard him refer to Harry as he did, it was hard work for me to keep from knocking him down.”

“ As I said, it was only his years that protected him.”

“ I never heard such an insult ; I am indignant enough to buy his house and lot and turn him out.”

“ You can’t do that very well, father,” replied the son, with a smile, “ for he owns it himself, but it would serve him right.”

“ I wonder whether Harry had anything to do with robbing — that is, with visiting his truck patch.”

“ Of course he did,” laughed the younger ; “ I overheard him two days ago, planning the thing with Washy Philbrick and Walter Hodgkins.”

“ Well, boys will be boys, and what is the sense

of people making such a fuss over a little harmless mischief? I'm sure I did a great many worse things when I was of his age, and nobody cared."

"Will you say anything to Harry?"

"No,—and I don't wish you to speak about it, either. If Uncle Mike had been respectful and treated me as he should, perhaps I might have advised Harry to be more careful. But, pshaw! what does it all amount to? It isn't worth a snap of your fingers. We're never young but once, and I say let the boys have all the fun they can get out of life."

Mr. Philbrick was in his sitting-room that evening, reading a newspaper, with his wife engaged with some needlework, when he heard the footsteps of his son in the kitchen and called him to him. The lad came briskly forward, his face the picture of innocence, and stood respectfully before his parent.

"Washy," said the latter, gravely, "old Michael Doland came into the store this afternoon and told me that Harry Michener, Walter Hodgkins, and you broke into his garden patch to-day and stole and destroyed a lot of his berries."

Washy's eyes expanded, and the grievous expression on his freckled countenance melted the hearts of his parents, but both restrained their emotions for the moment, and the boy, swallowing a lump in his throat, and striving hard to keep back the tears, said brokenly :

"What an awful thing to say about me, papa! Why, I wouldn't do such a thing to save my life, and you know it!"

Then he broke down, and, gouging his eyes, whimpered as if the charge were more than he could bear. His mother sprang from her chair, and, throwing both arms about his neck, backed toward her seat, dragging him after her.

"You poor, dear, little, sweet, innocent lamb! Did any one dare to say such wicked things about my pet, that wouldn't harm a fly? There, there, don't cry! don't cry! I'll give you a nice present in the morning!"

By this time the mother had managed to see-saw Washy upon her lap. He was so big that when he was thus located you could see very little of his parent. Her dress showed, as she rocked rapidly back and forth, and one of the arms wrapped about the shoulders of her hopeful flapped up and down, as she lovingly patted his cheek. The rest was composed of the body and legs of Washy, the latter partly encased in knickerbockers, while, deeming the occasion suitable, he blubbered harder than ever. Somewhere underneath the boy's shoulders a muffled, sympathetic voice kept time to the hand-patting and rocking of the chair.

"There, now, my sweetie, deary lamby,—don't cry! don't cry—"

Suddenly the mother shoved the astonished lad

off her lap, abruptly ceased rocking, and, sitting very erect, sharply addressed her husband :

“George Washington Philbrick ! did you allow that wicked man to say such slanderous things about *your* child, — *our* Washy ? ”

“He said ‘em before I knew what he was driving at.”

“And, George Washington Philbrick, what did *you* do ? ”

“Took him by the neck, jammed him through the door, and flung him headlong off the porch.”

“If you hadn’t done that I wouldn’t have lived with you another day ! Yes, sir, I should have gone home to mother.”

“What’s the use of harping on that string, when I’ve told you what I did.”

“I was just thinking — ”

“Well, suppose you stop thinking. I was as indignant as you ; I know there was never a better boy than Washy, and it is only mean jealousy that prompts these slanders about him. He is truthful, honest, and a careful respecter of the rights of others.”

“Of course he is ! ” and seizing the arm of Washy, the mother vigorously pulled him over upon her lap again, and patted and soothed him while the boy cried harder than ever, well knowing that by so doing he added to the value of the present that was to be his on the morrow.

CHAPTER II.

THE RAID THAT FAILED

It was a cool, soft summer night when Uncle Michael Doland, buckthorn in hand, stealthily crept among the currant bushes at the rear of his garden, and, assuming an easy position, settled down to wait for a visit from the young raiders who had already played havoc with his berries and vegetables.

During a walk which the old man made to the village that afternoon, his wife, with the hickory stick within instant reach, peeped from the back window every minute or two, ardently hoping for the arrival of the young scamps, and she was much disappointed that they did not appear before the return of her husband.

The latter had been in his place less than an hour, when he heard a sound which he knew was not caused by the wind. The sky was clear, and the moon, about half full, shed a mild, fleecy light upon meadow, forest, and town. He had heard the rattle of a wagon long after it passed down the

road in front of the house ; some one walked past whistling, and it was strange that his tune did not die out until he seemed fully a mile away ; the listener heard the shout of a man, and the reply of the one to whom he called, and both were a long way off. The noises from the village were subdued, but they were audible and wonderfully distinct when their nature is remembered. At some seasons the rumble and hum of the woollen mills filled the night, but they were now silent.

Something, I say, fell upon the listening Uncle Michael's ears, which he knew was not produced by the wind that now and then gently disturbed the vegetation.

But, instead of sounding from a point outside the garden, it was from within. If made by a person, he was already upon forbidden ground. The old man parted the bushes in front of him and peeped out.

He was annoyed by the suspicion that his wife, growing impatient, had come to join him ; but, instead of her, he saw a boy walking guardedly toward him, often pausing and looking 'round, as if searching for some one. Before the man could speak or recognise the lad, the latter called out, in a cautious undertone :

“Helloa, Uncle Mike, where are you ?”

“Ah, it's yersilf, Jim ! Hist ! come hither.”

Recognising the point whence the hail came, the

youth hurried to the currant bushes, and crouched down beside the old fellow, who was not a little puzzled, and asked :

“ What is it that brings ye here, Jim ? ”

“ I came down to help you, Uncle Mike.”

“ To hilp me ! ” was the astonished exclamation ; “ what do ye know about me naading hilp ? ”

“ Those three boys that robbed your patch the other day are coming down here to-night to do it again. I told Aunt Bridget, and she said you were out here watching for them. You know I thought you might need me, for it makes me angry to think of the mean way they are acting toward you.”

“ Jim,” said the grateful old man, “ you’re a born gintleman, but, thanking ye all the same, I don’t naad yer hilp. Do ye mind *that* ? ”

As he spoke, he handed the heavy buckthorn to Jim, who carefully “ hefted ” it.

“ My gracious, Uncle Mike ! you mustn’t hit too hard with that.”

“ Can any one hit them spalpaans too hard ? ”

“ I am afraid you might in your anger ; but I thought that, as there are three of them against you, and they are all big fellows, they might be too strong for you.”

“ What ! wid that shillaleh ? Me boy, ye don’t know your Uncle Mike ; ye niver were in attindance at Donnybrook Fair.”

"Now," persisted the shrewd Jim Winters, who was determined to stand by the old man, "those three boys deserve punishment, don't they?"

"Av coarse, and they'll get the same whin they come within raich of that stick, rist your soul aisy as to that."

"But they are cowards, as all bullies are; when you whack one of them, the other two will run away; one of them at least will unless he is prevented. You are too old to go as fast as they, while I can outrun any one of them, and, Uncle Mike, *I'll do it!*"

The old man's eyes sparkled in the gloom. He saw the plan of the chivalrous youth, and it filled him with admiration. If adopted, it ensured the punishment of all three of the nuisances.

"Misther Jim, will ye do me the great honour and favour of allowing me to shake your hand? There's only one boy that's your aquil in smartness, and that's me wife Bridget."

Jim Winters laughingly complied with the request, adding:

"I'll look out for those that start to run away — "

"St! the spalpaans are here!"

Jim ran to the other side of the loose paling and crouched down in the currant bushes, so that the entrance was guarded on both sides.

There was no mistake about the arrival of the

raiders, who were dimly seen the next moment through the fence as they halted, not certain as to the precise place where they wished to enter the garden. They talked in low tones, every word being audible in the stillness.

"There's a light in the house," said one; "I wonder if the old feller is on the lookout."

"What if he is? He can't hear us; we won't make any noise."

"Mebbe he's got a dog."

"No, he hasn't; I went by the house to-day on purpose to see."

"Won't he be mad," chuckled one of the youngsters, whose voice could not be recognised, "when he comes out in the morning? I tell you, fellers, we must make a clean job of it this time."

While they were conversing in low tones, one of them was moving cautiously along the fence, trying the different palings, in search of the one that had been loosened, not knowing that it had been renailed and made insecure again.

"Here it is!" he suddenly exclaimed, as he noiselessly wrenched the upper portion free and leaned the stick against the others; "everything is lovely."

"You go first, Harry, and we'll foller."

The youth thus identified took off his hat, stooped down and carefully shoved himself through sideways. It was a close fit, and his clothing

could be heard scraping against the palings, but he readily made the passage, replaced his hat, brushed off his clothes, and stood aside for Washy Philbrick, who came through in the same manner, and was promptly followed by Walter Hodgkins.

All the trespassers now stood together and looked around and listened, with a certain uneasiness that always comes to persons when entering upon some unlawful act. From the kitchen window of the little house, a hundred feet distant, shone the dim light of a kerosene lamp, but everything was as still as the grave.

"Well, fellers, let's begin ; I'll take — "

At that moment Uncle Mike sprang like a bulldog from the bushes with upraised shillaleh.

"Arrah, ye spalpaans, I've got ye now ! I'll taich ye how to rob a poor man, ye murthing thaives !"

The attack was so impetuous and unexpected that the three stood for the instant transfixed. Then when the circling buckthorn descended upon the pate of Harry Michener, and he went down with a howl and "dull thud," his companions saw what it all meant and fled for their lives.

They did not attempt to return by the way they had entered, for they were certain the raging lion would kill them before they could squeeze through. They started across the garden in a wild break for the highway that ran in front of

the house. As Walter was passing Jim Winters, the latter thrust out his foot, tripped him, and as he sprawled among the vines he called to his ally:

"Come here, Mike, quick, and tend to this one on the ground while I go for the other!"

Washy Philbrick had veered to the left, and was dashing with might and main straight across the garden, aiming for the open gate which connected it with the yard surrounding the house, beyond which was the outer fence of palings, separating the yard from the public road. He had gained a good start, and could run quite fast, especially when he thought his life depended upon his success, but, leaving Walter to be attended to by the irate Uncle Mike, who rushed upon and hammered him back before he could rise, Jim Winters sped after the flying Washy.

A few seconds carried the fugitive through the open inner gate, with Jim a half-dozen paces behind him. Suddenly from the door of the kitchen dashed Aunt Bridget, who was listening, and, hearing the tumult, was as eager as her husband to take part in the affray. She had nursed the hickory cane for more than an hour, and seeing the two boys running like the wind, under the shadows of the trees in the yard, she naturally supposed both were fleeing raiders. She was the nearer to Jim, and aimed a blow at him, which,

had it landed, would have stretched him senseless. He could not see well enough in the gloom to dodge, but his speed saved him, the stick grazing his cheek as it whizzed past. He did not stop to explain, and he was beyond reach before Aunt Bridget could repeat the effort.

Instead of using the gate the fugitive took the fence, clearing it nicely, with his pursuer following like a bloodhound. He went over the fence in the same manner as Washy, and, since both now had the middle of the broad highway, the race was a fair one.

Jim steadily gained, and knew the game was his. Washy in his panic had supposed that raging Uncle Mike was at his heels with deadly shillaleh, but several glances over his shoulder made known the astonishing fact that he was chased by a boy who was not as large as himself. Inasmuch as it was clear that the lad, whom he did not recognise, was bound to overtake him, Washy made a virtue of necessity. Shoving his hat back on his forehead, he wheeled about, and, still panting from his exertion, put up his fists in the attitude of defence and sullenly demanded :

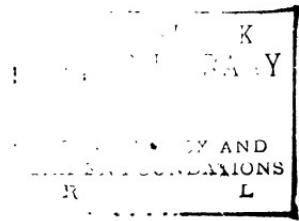
“ Who are you and what do you want ? ”

“ *You*, ” was the reply, “ and I guess I’ve got you.”

Just then Washy in the moonlight recognised the other.



"JIM STEADILY GAINED, AND KNEW THE GAME WAS HIS."



XY AND
R&L COMBINATIONS

R

L

"Oh! it's *you*, is it, you sneak? I've been waiting for a chance at you."

"Well, you needn't wait any longer; if I hadn't wanted you, I wouldn't have chased you so far."

"It's just fun for me to chaw up such goody-goody boys as you, and if I don't give you something to remember — "

At that moment Jim Winters opened hostilities, and for a few seconds it looked as if the two boys were wrapped in a cyclone, and then the end came. Washy lying on his back in the dust, with Jim hammering him, bellowed for mercy.

"Let me up! Don't you see I can't help myself? Do you want to kill a feller?"

"That's about the best thing that can be done with you, and I don't think anybody would care except your own folks."

"Let me up, Jim! Say, I hain't got nothing agin you; what's the use of hitting a feller when he's down and can't help himself? Murder! fire! help!" yelled Washy, as he fiercely tried to twist himself free.

Jim made his victim solemnly promise not to plague Uncle Mike any more, and to do all he could to prevent Harry and Walter from vexing him. Then he allowed the lad to rise, and even picked up his hat and handed it to him. Washy was a sorry-looking object, with torn and dusty clothing and battered countenance. He said not

was not injured so badly, but he insisted that Uncle Mike had made a deliberate attempt to massacre the little party, who merely entered his garden for the sake of making a short cut to their home, without a thought of doing him any injury. If the three boys had not put up the bravest kind of a fight, not one would have lived to tell the tale.

Washy Philbrick was fortunate enough to steal into his house, and reach his room, unseen by his parents. He hoped he would be all right in the morning, and that every evidence of his encounter with Jim Winters would disappear before that time. But when he awoke at daylight from his troubled sleep, and looked into the glass, he was startled by his reflection. There was a big lump on his forehead, one eye was "in mourning," and his nose was nearly double its usual size.

"And my face is lopsided," he gasped; "I wonder if it'll ever get straight again."

Now, you will understand that Washy's case was a much more humiliating one than that of his two comrades. It was no special disgrace that they had been overcome by a full-grown man (even if he were past middle life), armed with a weapon like a policeman's night-stick, but Washy had been trounced by a boy younger and smaller than himself, and he would rather take a second similar punishment than confess it.

He had framed his story before he came downstairs and met his father, who hardly recognised him. It was singular, and yet perhaps it was not, that his explanation agreed with that of Walter, to the effect that the three young friends started to cross the garden for the purpose of making a short cut homeward, when the old man sprang upon them like a tiger.

"He had a telegraph pole in his hands," said Washy, thickly, "and he broke it to splinters over our heads, before we could help ourselves."

Mrs. Philbrick went into hysterics, while her husband was pale with anger, but more self-possessed. When she recovered, she declared that if he waited one hour before bringing the awful man to justice, she would pack up, and go to the home of her parents, and never, never, return.

"Madam," replied her life-partner, sternly, "it is my intention to see justice done; I beg you to offer me no inducements to be laggard in the matter."

Fortunately, before the wife was able to grasp the length, breadth, and depth of this remark, it passed from her mind, for she found no cause for complaint as to the prompt action of her husband. He wished to question his son as to the particulars, but the mother would not permit.

"The darling, sweet lamb feels too awful! I won't allow it; wait till he gets well, *if he ever does—oh!*"

And she had her arms about his neck, and hauled him over again into her lap, rocking and patting the cheek that looked like an apple dumpling. Washy started to whimper, but his face felt so odd that he was scared, and abruptly stopped. Then he kicked himself free, and walked gingerly to another rocking-chair, into which he dropped, and began swaying himself back and forth.

The succeeding few days more than repaid Washy for all that he had suffered. He was fed on oranges, ice-cream, and sweetmeats, and was able to keep out of the grasp of his mother's yearning arms, by exclaiming that she hurt him every time she attempted to embrace him.

Within the hour that followed Washy's appearance before his parents, Mr. Philbrick had donned his hat and coat, and gone to the office of Mr. Michener, who was in a state of mind over the woful condition of his youngest son. Hardly had the two met, when Mr. Hodgkins, keeper of the hardware store, came in panting and indignant. Mr. Michener was the most self-possessed, and begged his callers to be seated.

"It's the greatest outrage I ever heard of," said Mr. Philbrick, after there had been a comparison of notes; "the wonder to me is that those three boys are alive to-day."

"A case of premeditated murder," added Hodgkins; "that old Irishman must be crazy."

The mill-owner raised his finger warningly.

"Don't start that idea, or we shall estop ourselves from having him punished as he deserves. An insane man, you know, cannot be held accountable for his acts."

"But he can be locked up in an asylum," suggested Mr. Philbrick.

"And that may be the very thing he desires, for he will be well taken care of without any expense to himself. No; our position is that this scoundrel made an unprovoked and murderous assault upon our children, and he must answer therefor."

"What is the punishment for such a crime?"

"A long term in the penitentiary."

"Good! he ought to be put there for life!" declared Mr. Philbrick, while his neighbour nodded his head, smiled, and added, "That's so."

"No case could be clearer," continued Mr. Michener; "these three boys are taking an innocent walk through the country, and, in order to reach home sooner, start across lots, which happens to take them through this old man's garden. Technically, they had no right to enter upon his land, and they were trespassers in the eye of the law. Admit that; what were *his* rights? Simply to order them off, and if they failed to obey, he could use force in ejecting them."

"Had he the right to murder them?" demanded Mr. Hodgkins.

"He has the right, under such circumstances, to use only such force as is necessary. Anything beyond that is a violation of law."

"I understand from Washy that the scoundrel did not utter one word in the way of command, for them to turn aside, but, with a series of the most horrible oaths, began beating them with an immense club."

"His account agrees with that of Harry in every particular."

"And so it does with Walter's," added that young man's father.

"There is no possible doubt, therefore, that it is the true one. I am positively certain that Harry wouldn't tell a falsehood to save his life."

"And I know that Washy abhors a lie as he does a rattlesnake. His mother can make him shed tears any time, by reading him the story of Washington and his little hatchet. It's a great comfort to know our children are truthful."

"It is indeed," assented Mr. Michener, with a gentle sigh, "and I don't understand why folks are so squeamish in these times about a little harmless mischief in boys. It wasn't so when *we* were boys. I pity the man who can ever forget that he was a child. Wasn't it Oliver Wendell Holmes who said he would rather be a young man of seventy than an old one of forty-five? That's the true philosophy for you. Why, I

remember that, when I was only eight years old, I scorched the cat's tail in the fire, and then held it in the cream pitcher to cool off, and, instead of punishing me, my mother thought it was real cute and encouraged my inventive genius, as she called it. In church, when Deacon Bodfish was snoring, I drew the end of a tenpenny nail the whole length of his bald pate, leaving a red mark from his forehead to his neck. When he snorted and made a grab for me, my mother smiled, and asked him in a whisper whether he ever saw such a cunning little dear. I don't remember what he answered, but I kept out of his reach for several days afterward. No; my parents never punished me for such innocent mischief, and they were right."

Mr. Hodgkins could not forbear asking, with a smile :

"What sort of a man would you have been if they *had* punished you?"

"Ruined! utterly spoiled; all the charming frankness of childhood destroyed—"

"But see here," impatiently interrupted Philbrick; "we are forgetting why we have met together; what's to be done about old Michael?"

"I thought that out before you came," replied the mill-owner; "there is but one thing to do; we will make complaint before Justice Lawton of assault and battery against Mike, and he will hold him under bail to await the action of the

grand jury, and *that* is the body that will settle him."

"What is the order of proceeding?" asked Mr. Hodgkins, who, like Mr. Philbrick, knew less of law than their wealthy neighbour.

"Very simple; I will get my lawyer, G. Waldo Jones, to draw up the complaint and present it to Justice Lawton; he will issue a summons against old Michael, who will be given a chance to appear before the justice, who will hear the testimony pro and con, and then hold him to bail."

"Will he be fined?"

"No; the offence is too serious for that. Besides, we can't afford to appear in the light of wishing to extort money from the miserable scamp. The safety of our children is too precious to us to be weighed with dollars and cents."

Mr. Michener seemed about to apply his handkerchief to his eyes, but changed his mind and looked fierce, as did his two callers.

"There's no time like the present," he added; "my boy is hardly well enough to appear in court for two or three days."

"It's the same with Washy — confound the villain!" added Mr. Philbrick, referring to the author of his son's woes.

It will be noted that in this conversation the name of Jim Winters was not once mentioned, though, as you know, he was one of the most

important actors in the stirring events described. You have guessed the cause for the omission, for none of the boys had spoken his name except to one another. Walter Hodgkins called upon his other associates, passing back and forth several times, during which a perfect understanding was effected among the three, as to the account they were to give of the way in which they received their injuries.

The agreement was that Uncle Mike should be charged with being the cause of all their bruises, while nothing should be said of Jim Winters, not, however, that there was any intention of letting him escape.

"We've got it in for him," said Washy, at the first conference held at the bedside of Harry, when no others were present; "and we'll settle with him after they've sent old Mike to jail for forty years."

"Washy, how was it he managed to do you up?" asked Harry; "I never quite understood that. You're bigger than he is and are a good wrestler and fighter."

"Why, he catched me foul; I thought it was old Mike coming after me with his fence post, when he heaved a stone which took me between the shoulders and knocked the wind out of me. As I was getting up to go at him, he threw three or four more stones, and then was off before I could catch him."

Harry smiled as well as his damaged mouth
would permit and said:

"Wishin' that story will do no harm, but it's
so interesting to Walter and me."

"Very well; I won't tell it to you again, but
not to the other folks."

CHAPTER IV.

BEFORE JUSTICE LAWTON

UNCLE MIKE DOLAND was frightened almost out of his senses when Constable Simmons walked out to his humble home, and handed him a paper, which he explained was an order for him to appear at three o'clock in the afternoon on a date named, to answer the charge of assault and battery against the persons of Harry Michener, Washington Philbrick, and Walter Hodgkins.

The constable was friendly to the old man, and presented the matter in such a light that he robbed it of most of its terrors.

"You will need a lawyer, which won't cost you much, to look after your interests, and I'm sure you won't have any real trouble."

Let us pass over the minor events of the next few days, and come to the hearing before the justice of the peace. The lawyer engaged by Uncle Mike was Victor Hunt, a bright young man, a native of Arundale, who was held in general respect in the community, and of whom good things

were prophesied by his friends. Having received Uncle Mike's account of the incidents of the night in his garden, he sent for Jim Winters, with whom he had several interviews, instructing him to speak to no one of his part in the matter.

"Those young scamps are too chagrined to tell about it, but we will bring it out in the hearing, and there's no telling what may happen."

I should do the Arundale community injustice if I gave the impression that all the people were leagued against Uncle Mike. On the contrary, four-fifths of them sympathised with him, and, outside of the families of the three boys named, it would be hard to find one who did not rejoice over the rough trouncing they had received.

Justice Lawton's office, which was unusually roomy, was crowded to its utmost capacity on the afternoon of the hearing. There were fully a dozen standing on tiptoe outside the door, in the effort to peep over the heads of those in front and see and hear the proceedings, while the two windows were masses of eager, peering, curious faces.

You know that proceedings in the office of a justice of the peace have none of the dignity of a regular court. They often lose all formality, and it may be said that matters sometimes run away from the presiding officer. At the same time, it is necessary to follow certain forms, else

the proceedings would be illegal and the justice could not retain his office.

'Squire Lawton should rank above the ordinary country justices. He had a good rudimentary knowledge of law, and was conscientious.

G. Waldo Jones, the lawyer employed by the plaintiffs, was a few years older than the opposing counsel, Victor Hunt. He had been persuaded to leave the city of New York and locate in Arundale, where, Mr. Michener assured him, there was promise of speedier success than in the metropolis. The legal business of the woollen mills, which was placed in his charge, was no small item of itself. G. Waldo Jones parted his hair in the middle, and smoked cigarettes.

On one side of the room, directly in front of the justice, when he rapped his gavel for order, were the three boys, their fathers, and their counsel. On the other side were Uncle Mike, Jim Winters, and their lawyer. Bridget Doland insisted upon appearing as a witness, but Mr. Hunt convinced her it was not necessary, and it would be better for her to stay away.

"Your honour," said Lawyer Jones, impressively, "it becomes our duty to call your attention to one of the most shameful outrages of which we have record. On the night of August 13th, only four days ago, three boys, while peacefully walking homeward, with no thought of evil in

their hearts, were set upon by a ferocious wretch and beaten until their lives were placed in jeopardy. Fortunately, they have recovered sufficiently to appear in the court-room, and give their evidence which ought to consign that man over there to the penitentiary for the remainder of his miserable life.

"Of course, your honour, this tiger on two legs has a flimsy pretext for his crime. The three boys, wishing to hasten home, decided to take a shorter cut thither. This happened to lead them across the property of the accused. In law they had no right to step upon his land without his permission, but what can three innocent boys be expected to know about the intricacies of law? It never occurred to them that they were doing an illegal act in thus invading this precious ground.

"Had the owner ordered them off, and had they refused to go, he would have been justified in using force in ejecting them. Did he pursue that honourable course? No, your honour. From his place of hiding, he leaped upon them, club in hand, and when he ceased beating them, it was from exhaustion, and he could rage no longer.

"Then, your honour, the poor, innocent, frightfully mauled youths gained a chance to crawl away from the spot, and to reach their homes, after dreadful sufferings on their part. Prompt medical skill saved their lives, but no mercy therefor should be shown to the author of their injuries.

"I am aware, your honour, that these are grave charges, but we are prepared to substantiate them, and, as the first step, I call Harry Michener to the stand."

The boy blushed when so many eyes were focussed upon him. There were several plasters on his face, which was much discoloured from the blows of the buckthorn, and no one looking at him could doubt that he had passed through a trying ordeal.

Having been coached by Lawyer Jones and his father, the youth satisfied the court that he knew the nature of an oath, after which he was sworn, and, in answer to his counsel's question, told the story of that eventful night. Since it agreed with the one already outlined by his parent and his counsel, it need not be repeated. When the narrative of suffering innocence and outraged justice was completed, his lawyer nodded to the opposing counsel and said :

"The witness is yours."

"I have no questions to ask him."

"I admire your discretion; I don't think it would be advisable to bring out any more truth than we have done."

Lawyer Hunt smiled and leaned back in his chair. Most of the audience were surprised that young Michener was not cross-examined. Even Jim Winters was puzzled, but he took comfort in

the thought that the young man understood his business. Uncle Mike sat bunched over in his chair, the buckthorn between his knees, while now and then he feebly bit at its knob. There was little that he understood in all this formality, but, somehow or other, his faith had become settled that his counsel would take care of him, and prevent his being hanged.

The second witness was Washy Philbrick, whose face was knobby, discoloured, and twisted. His story, of course, was a repetition of that which had just been told. The only variation was in the declaration that, when old Mike pounced upon them from his hiding-place, he uttered the most dreadful oaths the shocked lad had ever heard.

"Perhaps my learned friend would like to question *this* witness," remarked Lawyer Jones, with fine sarcasm.

"My learned friend is right."

"Ah! now we shall learn something worth while," sneered Mr. Jones.

"I have a suspicion that you will, for you are in need of it," replied Lawyer Hunt, with a bow and smile.

"Certainly we do not apply to *you* for knowledge."

"For the good reason that you know you will get too much of it —"

Mr. Jones was on the point of retorting when Justice Lawton rapped sharply with his gavel.

"The counsels will confine themselves to the business before the court. The personalities are not only lacking in wit, but have no place here. Mr. Hunt, if you have any questions to ask the witness, you now have the opportunity."

Apologising for the recent tiff with the opposing counsel, and meekly accepting the reproof of the court, Mr. Hunt turned to the witness, who sat grinning as well as his misshapen countenance would permit, at the prospect of a scrap between the opposing counsel. Washy sat with his long legs, clothed in knickerbockers, crossed, and twiddling his thumbs, with not the remotest thought that any one would dare question the truthfulness of the story he had told.

"Washy," said Mr. Hunt, in his fatherly manner, "you have just shown that you understand the nature of an oath; you have sworn to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, for you know if you do not, you will be punished hereafter. Besides that, if you should swear to anything that is not true, you will commit the crime of *perjury*, for which you can be put in jail for a long time. Now, if you happened by accident to make any slip in what you have just told, this is the chance to straighten it out, and there won't be any perjury at all. You understand that, Washy?"

The boy nodded his head, and swallowed a lump in his throat, for the words alarmed him. Then, too, he didn't like the sight of Jim Winters sitting at the elbow of the lawyer, and looking fixedly at him. It made the witness uneasy.

"Washy, you have said that it was because you wanted to hasten home that you started to cross the grounds of Uncle Mike."

"Yes, — that's so."

"You had been walking over the Scotch Road, and wished to pass to the main highway running in front of Uncle Mike's home?"

"Yes."

"You could readily pass to the north or south of Uncle Mike's truck patch, where it was open meadow."

"Yes, but that would have been further to travel."

"How much further?"

"I don't know, but twenty steps sure."

"And so, to save those twenty steps, you took the trouble to climb over the paling fence of Uncle Mike — "

"No, we didn't, neither."

"Didn't climb over it! How, then, did you manage to enter the patch?"

"We pulled off a paling so we could crawl through."

"You yourself pulled it off?"

"No; Harry was at the head and he done it."

"I object, your honour; counsel has no right to ask such absurd questions."

"The objection is not sustained; counsel has the right to bring out all the circumstances," was the prompt reply of Justice Lawton; "proceed, Mr. Hunt."

"Perhaps my learned brother has some more instructions to give the court, which he evidently thinks doesn't know its business. I yield that he may do so."

With his exasperating smile, Lawyer Hunt bowed to Lawyer Jones, who flushed as he heard a titter run around the room.

"Don't get too gay, my friend; we're not through with you yet," replied Lawyer Jones, compressing his lips and shaking his head.

"Well, Washy, I am glad that you are determined to tell the truth; no one can persuade you to commit the shocking crime of perjury, for which you would be sent to jail. You say that your friend, Harry Michener, pulled off the paling; was it very hard work for him to do so?"

"No; you see the paling was loosened last week."

"How?"

"Why, when we was there before —"

"I object!" thundered Lawyer Jones; "counsel has no right to go into matters previous to the

13th of August, when this assault and battery occurred."

"I insist that it is our right —"

"The objection is sustained," cut in the justice, with a rap of his gavel; "counsel will confine himself to what took place on the night of the 13th of August."

"No doubt my learned friend has some instructions up his sleeve for the honourable court," sneered Lawyer Jones, with a grin of triumph.

"No; I bow to the good sense and wisdom of the honourable court. I see that I erred, and that my learned friend's safety lies in limiting the truth so far as he possibly can; well, Washy, we now have you and your friends in the garden. After you entered, did you have any conversation?"

"Nothing in partic'lar; I believe something was said."

"What was it?"

The witness fidgeted in his seat.

"I don't exactly remember."

"But you remember what it was about; I am sure such a bright boy as you can recall what you said yourself."

"Of course he can't remember," broke in Lawyer Jones; "how many times do you want to be told?"

"I have a better opinion of your witness's intelligence than you. Was anything said, Washy,

about destroying the vegetables belonging to Uncle Mike?"

"Yes,—that is,—we thought there was a good chance, but," added Washy, brightening up, "we didn't hurt anything at all."

"Why not?"

"We hadn't time; old Mike was down on us before we could do a thing."

CHAPTER V.

THE HEARING

THE admission of Washy Philbrick may strike you as a great triumph for the defendant, inasmuch as it proved the evil intentions of the three boys in entering upon the property of Uncle Michael, and yet in a legal sense the testimony amounted to little or nothing. Whatever the motive of the boys, they did no harm, and human law deals with acts, not motives.

"Now," continued Lawyer Hunt, in his winning manner, "when you and your friends slipped through the fence of Uncle Michael, did you find any one there besides him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who was he?"

"That feller sitting alongside of you,—Jim Winters."

This declaration was a surprise to every one in the room, except to the boys, Uncle Mike, and Lawyer Hunt. As I have intimated, Jim Winters's name had not been mentioned to the parents of

the lads, nor to their counsel. All of them showed their keen interest in the proceedings. Mr. Hunt was handling the witness so skilfully that he told the truth, scared into doing so by his terror of committing the crime of perjury.

The pointed reference to Jim turned all eyes upon his handsome face, which blushed, but he kept his gaze on the countenance of Washy, who was so ill at ease that his battered features glowed with perspiration. Had his mother been present, she would have drawn him over into her lap and soothed and petted him and promised him another handsome present.

"Now, Washy, you made a little slip when you said Uncle Mike struck you with a club. You meant to say, did you not, that while he was thus exercising himself at the expense of your friends, you made a break and ran through his front yard, leaped the fence, and sped down the highway as fast your legs could carry you? That's what you meant to say, Washy?"

"Yes, that's what I meant to say; I don't see how I forgot it."

"We're all liable to such slips," remarked Lawyer Hunt, pleasantly; "you and I are getting along famously; in truth, Uncle Mike never struck you at all."

"No, sir; he didn't get the chance."

This declaration caused something like con-

sternation on the part of Mr. Philbrick and his friends. The father of Washy could not shut his eyes to the fact that his boy, who took the immortal Washington for his model, had told a shameful falsehood. It was an astounding discovery to the parent, who wondered what his wife would say when she learned it. At the same time, his resentment, instead of being turned against his scamp of a son, was kindled toward Lawyer Hunt, who was thus disgracing him in the eyes of his neighbours.

Moreover, if the lad was now telling the truth, as was manifestly the case, Harry Michener and Walter Hodgkins had been doing something in the opposite line, and their fathers were boiling with anger that Lawyer Hunt was bringing it out right before everybody.

"No doubt you are right, Washy; Uncle Mike would have beaten you, if he had only gotten the chance."

"That I would, bad luck to ye!" growled Uncle Mike, stamping his cane on the floor.

"But you received all your hurts from this young man sitting beside me, James Winters by name?"

"Yes, sir; he can fight like thunder, hang him!"

"And aware of that, you concluded discretion was the better part of valour?"

"I don't know what that means," grinned Washy.

"You thought the best thing to do was to run away from Jim?"

"That ain't exactly the way it was, Mr. Hunt; I didn't know it was him chasing me till I got pretty well down the road; as soon as I seen it was him, I stopped."

"What followed, Washy?"

"We had a fight," sheepishly replied the lad.

"The appearance of your face makes it unnecessary to ask how it came out, and I observe," added the lawyer, turning to look at Jim, "that my young friend doesn't show a scratch. Did he fight fair, Washy?"

"I s'pose so," growled Washy, fidgeting in his seat again.

"Aren't you sure of it? Remember what I told you about committing perjury."

"Yes; he fought fair."

"And gave you the biggest licking you ever had in all your life, and you deserved it."

The audience burst into applause, and, bringing his gavel down, Justice Lawton sternly said that if the thing was repeated he would order the room cleared.

Counsellor Jones leaped to his feet, pale with anger.

"Your honour," he thundered, "the defence has sprung this testimony on us, and it is a surprise—"

"I have witnessed and can tell them there was no such secret or conspiracy now or interrupted communication which caused all the trouble."

Counselor "Washy" continued the opposition to him, "but I need to say that you are committing a gross error if you will commit yourself to one man's story. I give you this fact we shall amend our Constitution and I shall vote for a Warren lot more than for any young Englishman."

"I do not care what I shall vote for a Warren lot more than for any young Englishman," said the other.

"I do not care what you notice that I would grant you a Warren lot more than for justice. These two boys were in a scuffle, it is true, in which one was as blameless as the other. The affair is too trifling to be worth a trial."

"It is a bad and poor innocent lad!" pleaded Hunt, his voice beginning to become pathetic, thought he could not bear the general titter and laugh at his words. He turned to his master, "look at his disconsolate eyes and clasp on his forehead—"

"And he is made of plumb," added Counselor Hunt, "and tell me who is fault it was. Washy, who struck the first blow?"

"He hit me first."

"But didn't you strike at him before that?"

"Yes, but he parried it and then let me have it between the eyes."

Even 'Squire Lawton could not restrain himself from joining in the uproarious laughter that fairly made the windows rattle. The three boys grinned, though their counsel and their parents could hardly repress their indignation.

Instead of placing Walter Hodgkins on the stand, Lawyer Jones announced that the prosecution, having clearly established their case, had nothing more to offer. Thereupon Lawyer Hunt called James Winters, who, smiling and modestly blushing, kissed the Bible, swore to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and sat down in the witness chair.

His testimony was brief and to the point, covering the ground with which the reader is already familiar, and confirming the latter account of Washy Philbrick. When his evidence was finished, Mr. Hunt turned him over to Mr. Jones, who, as may well be supposed, felt venomous, and was determined, figuratively speaking, to rend him to pieces.

"What is your name?" crisply asked the lawyer.

"James Winters."

"How old are you?"

"I will be fourteen the 20th of next December."

"Where do you live?"

"At Midvale, in this State, and about fifty miles from here."

"Ah! then Arundale can't claim the honour of being your birthplace or residence?"

"No, sir."

"How unfortunate! What are you doing in Arundale just now?"

"Answering your questions."

Again there was a titter in the room, and Lawyer Hunt signalled to Jim to refrain from trying to be "smart," for it is always a great risk on the part of a witness.

"Ah, my son, you are anxious to appear as a wit, I see; I shall have to be careful or I shall be unhorsed. To be plain, then, will you be good enough to tell me why it is you are here in Arundale, instead of being at your home in Midvale?"

"I am visiting my Aunt Dorothy Fisher."

"You have been there about a week?"

"A little longer."

"When do you return?"

"Next Monday."

"How we shall miss you, Jimmy! Do you attend the public school at Midvale?"

"Yes, sir."

"And I am sure you go to Sunday school?"

"Yes, sir."

"In fact, you are a real good boy, Jimmy; you wouldn't tell a lie now, Jimmy, for the whole great big round world, would you?"

"No, sir."

"What a wonderful boy! I think I can see the wings already sprouting out of your back. I am afraid you are too good for this world, Jimmy. Of course you think it is wrong to fight?"

"Yes, sir; except in certain cases."

"In certain cases? Will you mention a few in which you think it is the duty of a good little Sunday-school boy to fight?"

Everybody was listening closely, and all eyes were fixed upon Jim Winters. He clearly had the sympathy of nearly every one. 'Squire Lawton leaned back in his chair and idly toyed with his gavel, while he watched the lad's face. As he did so he said to himself, "He's the finest looking boy I ever saw."

"Well, I think it is my duty to defend any one who is helpless,—such as a girl, or woman, or cripple. If I saw three cowardly boys set upon a feeble old man I'd go to his help if I knew I should be killed!"

'Squire Lawton made no attempt to restrain the applause which followed the expression of this manly sentiment, while Lawyer Hunt tipped his chair back and clapped his hands. Lawyer Jones could not conceal his annoyance.

"I trust, your honour, that you will enforce order; such outbreaks are disgraceful."

"The court would suggest," blandly replied

the justice, "that the learned counsel refrain from tempting such outbreaks by his questions."

"A noble sentiment, my son! It is right that we should defend the helpless, but suppose the conditions you name were reversed, and it was the old man who attacked the boys with a murderous club?"

"If they had broken into his garden to steal or destroy, he would be doing right, and I would cheer him on."

"But suppose they had entered his garden merely to make a short cut home, and did not intend to do any mischief?"

Jim leaned back and sighed.

"No such thing ever took place; those three boys went in there to do all the damage they could, for I overheard them say so; they were the three who robbed Uncle Mike last week, and you know it as well as I."

Jim talked so fast that his words were uttered before the lawyer could check him.

"Remember, sir," he said, sharply, "you are simply to answer my questions."

"That was what I was trying to do."

"What you wrongly think took place last week has nothing to do with this case. You saw this man Michael Doland belabouring Harry Michener, Washy Philbrick, and Walter Hodgkins with a heavy cane."

"No; he thrashed Harry and Walter and *I* attended to Washy."

"How came it that you happened to be lying in wait with this man? How was it that you knew the boys were likely to attempt to cross his garden that night?"

"Harry Michener boasted to me that they were going to do it; I told him he was a mean coward to think of such a thing. He threatened to 'punch' me for what I said, but," added Jim, looking across the room at him, "he hasn't tried to do it yet. Then I hurried out to Uncle Mike's to tell him, but he was waiting in the garden at the time and I stayed and helped him."

"So you believe in telling tales, Jimmy?"

"Not unless it is to help a weak old man against three scamps. I didn't let up on Washy until he promised me never to vex Uncle Mike again. If I had got hold of Harry I should have made him promise the same, but he limped off before I came back. I guess, however, he has had enough."

"Your honour, this sweet little darling is too angelic to be harassed in this manner."

"Oh, I'm not harassed; I rather like it," said Jim; "go ahead."

"Our case having been established, we are sure your honour, for the safety of the community, will see that this savage brute of a man is fairly caged."

CHAPTER VI.

A SCHEME THAT FAILED TO WORK

"YOUR honour," said Lawyer Hunt, "will pardon me for saying you have the fullest sympathy for boyhood, as is shown by your ruddy countenance, your bright eyes, and your genial expression. You and I will be boys to the end of our lives; we love sport, play, and harmless mischief. We are fond of romping, of ball, and of all sorts of amusements, but we have no patience with *malicious* mischief.

"The expression, 'Boys will be boys,' is used to cover up all manner of wrong-doing in these times. The consequence is that little fellows are disrespectful, disobedient, and 'smart'; they jeer at old age, they smoke cigarettes, become obscene and profane, and when their parents are told that their children are going down the broad road to destruction, they merely smile, shrug their shoulders, or speak of them as sowing their wild oats, and sum it all up in the expression, 'Boys will be boys.'

"We have an illustration of this truth in the case before us. Three youths, the sons of respectable parents, have become pests in the community. Now, your honour, my learned friend may try to confuse the issue as much as he chooses, yet he, you, I,—*every one* knows those sneaks went into Uncle Mike's garden for the sole and single purpose of despoiling him; there is no earthly doubt that they had been there before. It is hard to corner such adepts at lying as they have proved themselves to be, and Uncle Mike deserves the thanks of every one for having given these nuisances a lesson which they are likely to remember. I am sure, therefore, you will dismiss this complaint, and proclaim again the good old English law that a man has the right to defend his property to the last extremity."

Now, I am sure the sympathy of every one of my readers is with Uncle Mike and against his three tormentors, who deserved everything they received. There can be no doubt, too, that 'Squire Lawton shared this feeling, but he was a clear-headed man, and he was undoubtedly right when he said :

"That the defendant has the right to defend his property to the last extremity against illegal attack is sound law. Every man's house is his castle, but in this instance the defendant committed a serious error. While I am free to admit

that, in my opinion, the claim of these boys that they entered the defendant's grounds for the single purpose of shortening their course homeward is absurd, and that they went thither to destroy the old man's property, yet it has been proven that they actually committed no injury, being restrained and set upon by the defendant before they could do so.

"Counsel for the complainant was correct in insisting that the defendant should first have warned the boys that they were trespassing, and, upon their refusal to leave, he would have been justified in ejecting them, using such force as was necessary. It will be seen that it is possible that a person might have done as these boys did and yet have no unlawful purpose in mind. It cannot be claimed that he deserved painful punishment for his ignorance. The defendant, therefore, erred in assailing them as he did."

Uncle Mike, who was listening intently, now broke in with the question :

"How long should I have waited after the spalpaans cript through the fence?"

"Till they had actually committed some mischief, or refused to leave."

"Who the blazes would pay me for what they did?"

"Their parents are responsible and could be compelled to make good your loss."

"Then why the mischief don't they pay me for what the spalpaans have done before?"

"They didn't do anything!" shouted Mr. Michener, losing his self-control.

The 'squire quickly restored order, and continued:

"It is clear that the defendant committed an assault upon the boys, and I shall send the papers in the case to the grand jury, and hold him in bail to keep the peace for six months, and to be bound thereto in the sum of one hundred dollars. I may add, before adjourning court," said the justice, looking toward Lawyer Hunt, "that counsel for the defendant will instruct him clearly as to his rights within the law. He *has* such rights, but unless properly informed, he is likely to make other blunders that will injure himself."

"Thank your honour," replied the lawyer, "I shall take pleasure in acting upon your suggestion."

"This hearing is closed," said the justice, with a sharp rap of his gavel, and immediately the room was in confusion. Uncle Mike had his triumph, when four men, all property holders, hurried forward and asked the privilege of going upon his bail bond.

"Any one of you will answer," said the justice, with a smile, "and as you are first, Mr. McIntyre, I'll accept you," and the bond was quickly perfected.

In the seclusion of Mr. Hunt's office, he talked plainly to Uncle Mike.

"'Squire Lawton sympathised with you, but he did perfectly right in putting you under bonds to keep the peace. If these boys annoy you further, don't take the law in your own hands, but come to me; I will draw up a complaint against them, and they will be punished."

"S'pose they steal into my garden agin, Misther Hunt?"

"Keep a sharp lookout for them, and we will make their parents pay dearly."

"And I'm not to use my buckthorn?"

"Under no circumstances; to tell you the truth, I am surprised that you did not injure them more severely."

"Their heads are tough," said Uncle Mike, with a sigh, "but I shall thry to restrain mesilf; s'pose now the thraa attack *me*, Misther Hunt?"

"In that case, defend yourself with all your ability; you would fall short of your duty if you did not do so," replied the lawyer, warmly.

"Thrust me for that," remarked Uncle Mike, fondling his buckthorn; "would it be right now if I should tantalise them loike, with a view of persuading the spalpaans to attack me, Misther Hunt?"

The latter repressed the smile caused by the earnestness of the question, and made answer:

"It would be very wrong; go along quietly, attending to your own business, and never strike a blow except in self-defence."

Uncle Mike was honest in declaring he would do all he could to follow the advice of his counsel, and shortly after went home to his indignant wife.

Messrs. Michener, Philbrick, and Hodgkins had scored a victory, for Uncle Mike was placed under bonds to keep the peace for six months, and to answer to the indictment of the grand jury, should they see fit to take such action, but all three were in a resentful mood, for never, in all their experience, had their feelings been so violated.

What a splendid opportunity for these men to impress the sorely needed lesson upon their children, whose falsehood and baseness had been proven! It is strange that three parents of intelligence should be so blind to their duty, but such, alas! was the fact.

In the first place, perhaps it was natural that they were angered by the feeling shown against their boys on the part of the people gathered in the justice's court, and they were unaccustomed to hearing such plain language as was used by Lawyer Hunt against themselves. Michener and Philbrick felt that he had slandered them, and they consulted G. Waldo Jones about taking steps against him. He persuaded them it "would not pay."

Mr. Hodgkins called upon Victor Hunt in order to give him a piece of his mind. In return, he received a lecture from the young man which sent him home, half convinced that the lawyer was right, and that it was his duty to take Walter in hand and forbid his associating with Harry Michener and Washy Philbrick. The boy promised to obey his father, and at the first opportunity disobeyed him, the partial conversion of his parent being the only good that followed the incidents just told.

As it was, the boys were so scared by their experience that for a time they gave no further attention to Uncle Mike. While their anger toward him was intensified, they feared lest they would suffer at the hands of his friends, who were more numerous than they had ever suspected ; but there was one person whom they could never forgive, and whom they determined should not be permitted to return to his home without suffering the punishment he richly deserved.

In the first place, Jim Winters was an intruder, who had no right to come into the place, make friends with the other boys, and mix in with what was none of his business. The fact that he was younger than any one of the three, and had trounced the eldest severely, was gall and wormwood to them. It would never do to let him get away with a whole hide, and they resolved he should not.

On the Saturday night following the hearing before 'Squire Lawton, the three boys met under the old cherry-tree, about a hundred yards from the house of Widow Fisher, where Jim Winters was visiting. Harry Michener had called the meeting, as chairman of the committee of ways and means, the purpose being to decide upon the best method of "warming the jacket" of the aforesaid Jim Winters.

"It's got to be done, fellers," said Harry, who loved to affect a mysterious air, and who glanced furtively around as he lowered his voice, and made sure that no eavesdroppers were within hearing; "it'll be a disgrace if that chap goes home without being marked."

"That's what my mother told father," added Washy, "and she wanted to go down and take him by the neck, and whip him within an inch of his life. She said she knewed he had sneaked up behind me and used a club, or he never would have got the best of our fight."

"Father says we'd better call off the whole business," remarked Walter, "and stop fooling with other people."

"Your father is a fool!" was the impatient exclamation of Harry, and, instead of resenting the words, Walter said:

"That's what I've thought for a good while."

"Well," sighed Washy, "we're here, and right

over yonder is his Aunt Dorothy's house, and I guess he's at home, for there's a light in the sitting-room, and you know he's a good boy that doesn't often go out nights. How are we going to lick him?"

"It wouldn't do to tackle him in the house, for that would be against the law."

"And we'd have his aunt to fight; *he's* all we'll want to manage."

"It's easy enough to get him out-of-doors; I'll tell him some one under the cherry-tree wants to speak to him, and he'll come."

This declaration was made by Walter Hodgkins.

"Well," said Washy, "after we get him out here how will we manage it?"

"There's two ways," replied Harry, his manner showing he had given a good deal of thought to the problem; "two of us can be hid, and then all jump on to him at once, but there's objections to that."

"What are they?"

"We'll be in each other's way; you know how quick he is, and how he can dodge; we'd be apt to hit each other, and so mix things that he'll get the best of us. I have a better plan than that."

"What is it?"

"One of us will fight him first; of course, Jim will lick him, but as soon as he does, one of us, fresh and strong, will pitch right in, and fight him

like fury ; *that* fight will be about even, and then the third feller will have an easy thing laying him out, and we'll all give him a parting kick."

"That's a splendid idea !" exclaimed Washy ; "you start in first, let Walter foller, and I'll wind up and come in on the chorus."

"My plan was for *you* to start, Washy."

"No, I started the other night ; that's enough for me."

"But you are used to being licked ; once more won't make any difference."

"After you get through with him, you won't want any second dose, I can tell you ; no, sir, I don't begin the circus."

"What do you say, Walter, to starting in ?"

"And you play second ?"

"I'd prefer third."

"Well, I guess we'll all have to play second to him ; I tell you, fellers, the plan won't work," said Walter, earnestly ; "after Jim Winters has licked the first two of us, how do you know he will be so tired that he can't do up the one that's left ? When he got through with you, Washy, did he seem to be tired ?"

"Not half as much as I was."

"There's the trouble ; I don't like the plan."

"But," persisted Harry, who was loth to abandon the project, "s'pose he does go to work and do us all up, one after the other, by the time he is

through with the last he is sure to be a little tired, and the first two fellows will be fresh, and can take turns at him again. By gracious! we can wear him out after a time."

"I'll agree to take second turn, Harry, if you'll start the ball rolling, and Walter can come in last."

On this rock the conspirators split. No one was willing to submit to the inevitable trouncing that would fall to the first who attacked Jim Winters.

"Then we'll have to try the other plan ; get him out here and all jump on to him at once. I'll go down to the house, and tell him somebody wants to speak to him out here under the cherry-tree, and is too bashful to go to his house."

The plan was quickly arranged. Washy and Walter crouched in the angle of the worm fence, a few paces beyond the tree, and, walking briskly to the front door, Harry sounded the brightly polished brass knocker. Jim Winters himself answered the call.

"Say, Jim," broke in Harry, before he was recognised, "there's a feller out under the cherry-tree that wants to speak to you."

"Why doesn't he come here, then, and speak?"

"I say now, Jim, he's kind of bashful like and asked me to ask you to come out there ; he won't keep you more than a few minutes."

"Who is he?"

"He told me not to tell his name; he just wants to say a few words; you needn't be scared, for I'll stand by you, if there's any trouble."

Jim Winters saw through the whole plot. This was one of the occasions in which, after deliberate thought, he would have said he did wrong to fight, since there was no necessity for it, and he could avoid the encounter by staying in the house and refusing to walk into the trap set for him; but I am compelled to confess that Jim did the opposite.

"All right," he said, cheerily, "I'll go with you; the night is so warm, I'll leave my hat and coat in the hall; your friend will excuse me for meeting him in my shirt sleeves."

"Jee whiz!" thought Harry, with a shiver, "I wonder if he smells a rat. I'm glad I didn't agree to tackle him first."

"Lead on," said Jim, taking his place beside him; "I feel sort of savage to-night, and wouldn't mind a little scrimmage with some one."

"Oh, there ain't anything like *that*, Jim," said Harry, his teeth fairly chattering, as he saw he was walking straight into the worst scrape of his life.

It need not be said that Jim was on the alert. It was a pretty big contract to undertake to whip three boys, but that is what he expected to do. His purpose was, on the first demonstration from

any one of the three, to launch out with might and main at the nearest, and then follow it up in hurricane fashion.

"Where is your friend?" asked Jim, halting on the edge of the shadow cast in the moonlight by the cherry-tree. "Ah! there he comes," he added, as Walter Hodgkins walked out from the angle of the fence. "Helloa, Walter, what do you want of me?"

"Where's Washy?" asked the scared Harry.

"Why, he said he didn't feel very well and went home."

"That's a nice piece of work!" exclaimed the disgusted Harry; "why, it was him that wanted to speak to you; I'll pay him for playing me such a trick."

"I guess you two chaps know what he wanted to say," remarked Jim, "suppose you say it for him."

"Oh, we hain't got anything against you, Jim; come, Walter, it's getting late; let's hurry home."

"Good night," called Jim, laughing and watching the two boys as they hurried down the highway.

CHAPTER VII.

AN HONEST OPINION

SOME days after the departure of Jim Winters to his home, Mr. McIntyre, the bondsman for Uncle Mike, drove up in front of his house, jumped out of his carriage, and entered the gate, leading a young bulldog by a strap fastened to his collar.

"I have brought you a present, Uncle Mike," called the gentleman, sitting down on the bench outside the door.

"Do ye maan that dog, Mr. McIntyre?" asked the delighted old man, as he and his wife came out and looked admiringly at the canine.

"That's just what I mean; have those boys troubled you since?"

"Not that I know of."

"Well, you would have known it if they had; they were so scared by 'Squire Lawton's talk that they will behave themselves for awhile, but it won't last long; they'll soon be up to their old tricks, therefore, I bring you the dog; he's pure blood; he'll attend to them."

Uncle Mike surveyed the pugnacious-looking brute, and said :

“He looks as if he can fight.”

“*Looks* so! Why they are the species that don’t know anything else but fight; they never let go; you can cut their legs off, one after the other, and they’ll still bite and hang on; they never give up so long as there’s a breath of life in their body.”

“I should call him the Irishman among dogs,” suggested Aunt Bridget.

“That’s their nature. He’s two years old, just in his prime, and he likes a fight better than anything in the world; keep him tied up for a few days, and feed him well, until he gets acquainted with you. I would suggest,” added their visitor, with a wink, “that for some time to come you don’t let it be known you have a dog.”

“And why not, Mr. McIntyre?”

“Those boys might be afraid to visit your garden again; let them come once more, and Terror will attend to them; they won’t trouble you after that.”

“Ye spake like the wise man ye are,” said Aunt Bridget, gratefully; “and your instruchtions shall be follyed in spirit and letther.”

“Let me tell you,” added the gentleman, “that there is no violation of the law in this business. You have put up a notice, as Mr. Hunt advised,

warning all trespassers against entering your grounds ; you keep Terror the dog to prevent any such trespassing ; if any persons choose to disregard the warning, they can blame nobody but themselves for the consequences. All that you must take care to do is to prevent the dog from killing them after he once gets started."

" I'll thry to remimber that, if it doesn't slip me mind."

Some time later Mr. McIntyre drove away, first warning his friends again not to let it be known they owned a dog, and giving them instruction as to the best way of treating and training the animal. He was to be kept chained up at the rear of the house, where his owner soon made a kennel for him, and released at night to roam over the premises at will.

" He'll stay with you, and you'll find him on hand in the morning."

Sure enough, before the week was at an end, the same three boys that I have had so much to tell you about, at a later hour than usual, sneaked up to the rear of Uncle Mike's garden, engaged upon the same despicable errand that had taken them thither more than once before.

They had talked over matters, and made up their minds that all they had to do to carry out their viciousness in safety was to guard against being detected. Washy Philbrick declared over

and over that Lawyer Hunt should never again frighten him into "giving his friends away," and, to show his earnestness, he insisted he should be allowed to lead the raid upon the old man's property.

The hour selected was so late that the couple had been asleep for some time. Because no light was seen, the boys argued the old man could not be on the watch, but they spent considerable time in reconnoitring before venturing forward. At last all doubt of the coast being clear was removed.

"What a fool old Mike is," whispered Washy; "here he has left the paling off just as if he wanted us to visit his garden patch."

Which is precisely what Uncle Mike did wish.

Washy thrust one leg through, and squeezed his body after it. Harry was in the act of following, when the leader whirled about and began furiously jamming him back.

"What the deuce is the matter?" demanded the puzzled Harry.

"There's a lion coming like a house afire! Quick! quick! or we shall all be killed!"

There was a desperate scramble, for all three heard the ominous growl, and the sound of some animal crashing across the garden like a cyclone. As it was, Terror's eagerness defeated its own purpose. Instead of getting a fair grip upon the

boys, he managed only to fasten his teeth in the clothing of Washy Philbrick, who, feeling to some extent their sting, and hearing the ripping of cloth, howled with terror, as he scrambled through the fence, and joined the other two in their frantic flight for their lives, the bulldog refraining from following them.

The following day, Washy Philbrick, wearing his Sunday trousers, walked into the private office of G. Waldo Jones, and, tenderly seating himself, and making sure they were alone, said :

"I say, Mr. Jones, isn't there a law against a man keeping African lions?"

"Are African lions worse than those from Asia?"

"Well, then, *any* kind of lions."

"I never heard of any such law, and see no reason why there should be. Why do you ask?"

"Old Mike keeps a lion in his garden, and he set him on us last night."

"Ah, you have been trying to 'cut across lots' again, and you found a lion in your path. I am glad to hear it."

"Glad to hear it! Why do you say that?"

"Because I am. If you and those other boys are fools enough to sneak into Uncle Mike's garden after all the trouble I had to keep you out of jail, I hope he'll fill you full of buckshot, or set the biggest bulldog in the country on you.

Young man, do you know what you have escaped?" asked the lawyer, impressively.

"Well, yes, I think I do," replied Washy, his face twitching with pain, as he adjusted himself to the chair.

"That isn't what I mean; listen one moment."

Bounding from his chair, he snatched down a large volume of Patent Office Reports, and, turning over a few pages, pretended to read in a solemn voice:

"Any persons who shall pass through a palings fence into an aged person's garden, doing the same at night, and in the face of a notice to trespassers, shall, provided the owner of the garden is an Irishman by birth, be deemed guilty of a first-class felony, and shall be sent to jail without trial by judge or jury, and shall remain in jail for eleven years and six months at hard labour."

"There, young man," added the lawyer, slapping the book shut, and looking gravely at him, "you may thank your stars that Uncle Mike's dog drove you out of his garden before you had time fairly to enter it."

Washy turned pale, and rose to his feet.

"I — I — didn't know that; I guess I'll tell the other fellers."

"Don't delay in doing so, for I should hate to lose sight of you and them for so many years, but," he added, in a lower breath, "I don't think

any one else would regret it except your own folks."

After Washy had imparted his astounding information to Harry Michener and Walter Hodgkins, and they had unanimously agreed to abandon their campaign against Uncle Mike's garden, he went to his own home, where the first one he encountered was his frightened mother.

"Mercy, Washy!" she exclaimed, "do you know that your new pants up-stairs are ruined?"

"Of course I do," was the sullen reply.

"How did you do it?"

"That's a pretty question to ask! Do you think I chawed 'em up myself? The animal that did that was a royal Bengal tiger that Uncle Mike has just imported on purpose to kill us boys."

The mother came near fainting, and then backing to a chair, reached out her arms.

"My dear lamb! come sit down in my lap and tell me all about it."

"No; I can tell you just as well when I'm standing up. There ain't much to tell; me and the other fellers was walking by old Mike's house, when the tiger jumped over the fence and — well, I managed to get away before he killed me — that's all."

"That's all! I guess it isn't *all*! I'll attend to *this* myself, for your father hasn't the spunk of a

child ; I'll see whether folks are allowed to keep tigers to feed on little innocent boys."

"I think I'd let old Mike alone, mother, if I were you ; you don't amount to much in this business."

"I'll show you whether I do or not," and a half-hour later the carriage of Mrs. Philbrick stopped in front of Uncle Mike's place, and her coachman entered and told him the lady wished to speak to him at the front gate. The old man walked slowly out, with Terror at his heels. The dog stood meekly listening to the scathing abuse of his master, as if he understood it all, and meant to receive his share of the glory. When at last the indignant woman paused for breath, Uncle Mike said :

"There's the tiger, ma'am, that I kaap for just such spalpaans as yours ; I've instruchted him to kill the next thaif he catches on my land. May I ixpress my honest opinion, mum ?" asked the old man, doffing his hat, and bowing low.

"I suppose you can if you want to."

"Thank ye ; it's this,—the mother of that spalpaan of yours is the blamedest fool in the United States of America."

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGE SITUATION

I STARTED out at the beginning of this story by saying that the village of Arundale had a Mystery. No doubt, while reading the preceding chapters, you have wondered where that mystery was, since everything was as clear as it could be. You shall now learn of several occurrences that were the most puzzling of anything that ever took place in the history of the village. To some of the people they were beyond explanation, and I venture the belief that not one of you will understand them until I tell you how they all came about, and I promise not to forget to do this for you.

The bulldog that was presented to Uncle Mike ended all pilfering in his garden. The fierce canine became a genuine terror, indeed. Many boys turned off from the highway, and made a circle through the meadow, in order to get safely past the little house. A frowsy tramp barely escaped his teeth, by making an unnecessarily high jump over the gate. When it was safe

for him to do so, he crept back and vigorously chalked some marks on the fence, which caused all other vagrants who chanced to pass to keep on the even tenor of their way.

And yet Terror never disturbed any one who did not intrude upon the premises, and no respectable person was molested, when he went thither with an honest purpose. So the animal was well behaved in every respect, and did nothing for which the law could call him to account.

Uncle Mike followed the advice of his friend, Lawyer Hunt, and never took the dog with him on his visits to the village. The canine's combative disposition was sure to precipitate a fight with every one of his species whom he met, and he was likely to leave a trail of disabled canines the whole length of his promenade. Furthermore, if any person molested Uncle Mike, and the dog saw it, he would be sure to assail the offender. It will be readily seen that the final consequences were likely to be disastrous to his owner.

I wish I could say that all mean, petty persecution of Uncle Mike ceased after the coming of Terror ; but when three such boys as Harry Michener, Washington Philbrick and Walter Hodgkins are encouraged by their parents to do wrong, they are sure to find the means of doing it.

The summer and autumn waned, and in due time winter wrapped city and town in its icy

bands. Snow covered the ground, and Uncle Mike, as usual, made his daily walk to the village to buy such groceries as he needed. Hardly once did he do this without suffering at the hands of his enemies. They launched hard snowballs at him from the corner of the street, and when one had landed upon his head or back, and he turned indignantly to learn who threw it, he saw the three youngsters grinning, and each with his hands in his pockets, as if he never knew how to throw a missile. That one of the three had hurled the ball which hit him was certain, and yet the old man had no proof of it. Each would swear himself innocent, and they took care that no unfriendly eyes saw the wrong committed.

More than once Uncle Mike received painful hurts, and could he have gotten within reach of the miscreants he would have committed a frightful breach of his bond, but they were too nimble-footed for him to overtake, and when he attempted to throw anything at them in return, the effort was so puny that all broke into uproarious laughter.

Do any of my readers know what is meant by the term "soakers?"

When I was a boy, we had a great many snowballing contests. At school, in the winter-time, we often divided into two parties of apparently equal strength, and engaged in such mimic battles, which occupied most of the forenoon and afternoon re-

cess, and a great deal of the noon intermission. These contests were sometimes severe, but were generally marked by good nature. I once saw a singular occurrence. My older brother and the captain of the opposing side stood about a hundred feet apart, and each launched at the same instant a snowball at the other. Midway in air the two balls met fairly, and were shattered to fragments. While the occurrence, it would seem, might be expected where two score boys are throwing at one another, this is the only instance that ever came under my observation.

Knowing that a snowball fight was certain to occur on the morrow, many of us boys used to make a dozen or more balls of snow at our homes the night before, soak them in water, and leave them out to freeze. In the morning they were spherical masses of ice, resembling small cannon-balls, or, what is the same thing, modern baseballs. These dangerous missiles were called "soakers," and I know from experience how it feels to receive one of them on the side of the head, or in any part of the body.

Don't forget the nature of a "soaker," for I have something to tell you about them.

Jim Winters returned to Arundale to make another visit to his Aunt Dorothy, with whom he was a favourite, as it may be said he was with all his friends. At his home he had talked over

his experiences in the village, and it was his ardent wish that he would have no more trouble with the three boys who had wrought so much evil in the village. He firmly resolved to keep out of all difficulty with them, so long as it was possible to do so without violence to his sense of manliness and honour.

On the afternoon of his arrival, he walked down to the home of his old friend, Uncle Mike, anxious to learn how he and his wife were getting on. He was a little startled upon opening the gate to be met by a savage-looking bulldog, which scrutinised him closely, but Terror seemed able to recognise a gentleman when he saw him, and trotted at the boy's side, as if they had been lifelong friends. When the door was reached, Jim was patting his head, and the dog was frolicking merrily around him, as if challenging him to a romp in the snow.

"I'll give you one," said Jim, "after I've had a talk with the folks."

It need not be said that the youth received a warm welcome, for he was a favourite with the two, who appreciated his many fine qualities.

"How ye have grown!" exclaimed the grinning Uncle Mike, as he shaded his eyes, and leaned back, the better to survey him; "ye're a fut taller than ye were last summer."

"Hardly as much as that, Uncle Mike, but they tell me I am growing pretty fast."

"And ye're a mighty sight better looking than I ever saw ye."

"Hist, now!" broke in Aunt Bridget, "what do you maan wid such nonsinse?"

"Why, it's the fact, Bridget, and ye knows it."

"I know no such thing, for whin the spalpaan was here last summer, he was that handsome that he couldn't be any handsomer, wid his curly hair, rid chaaks, and bright eyes. I thought ye were a loikely lad, Mike, fifty years agone, but ye were nothing compared to our Jim."

"Come, come," laughed the blushing boy, "both of you have kissed the blarney stone, but you mustn't say such things to me or I shall be spoiled."

"Little danger of spoiling the likes of ye," said Aunt Bridget, leaning over and kissing the cheek which was as red as an apple; "arrah, now, if there were more like ye, there would be naught in the world but sunshine."

"Say, Aunt Bridget," said Jim, earnestly, "will you have buckwheat cakes and maple syrup to-morrow morning?"

"We have the same ivery morning, as long as cold wither lasts."

"I'm coming over to-morrow to take breakfast with you."

"How long will ye be in Arundale?"

"About a week."

"Then ye'll come over *ivery* morning and breakfast wid us."

"I'd like to do that, but I'm afraid Aunt Dorothy won't consent. Have an extra lot ready, for you don't know what an appetite I have. But, Uncle Mike, I have just gotten here, and haven't heard any news. Tell me whether those boys pester you any more."

The old man's face became grave and then lightened up.

"They paid the garden one visit, not knowing of me dog ; Terror, as is his name, lived on the saats of trousers for the nixt two or three days."

Jim threw back his head and made the room ring with laughter.

"Good ! I'm glad to hear that ; one bout with Terror as you call him, ought to be enough for any person ; he's the finest bulldog I ever saw, and I think he and I have become friends."

"Av coarse ; how could it be any other way ?" and then the Irishman gave Jim Winters the greatest compliment he ever received, and one which he will remember to his dying day ; "if ye stipped on a rattlesnake, and he had one glimpse of yer face, he wouldn't strike ye."

"You may be sure I shall never make the test, Uncle Mike."

Not wishing Aunt Dorothy to feel slighted, Jim did not linger. As he bade his friends good-bye,

and opened the door, several flakes of snow struck him in the face, although it already lay to the depth of nearly a foot on the ground.

Terror stood a couple of paces away, his muscular legs firmly planted in the soft cold blanket, his massive head cocked to one side, and his bright eyes fixed intently upon the youth, his whole looks and appearance saying as plainly as so many words :

“ You’re the young man I’m waiting for.”

“ You look as if you wanted a tussle and you shall have it ! ”

The next minute they were at it, with Uncle Mike and Aunt Bridget laughing until the tears rolled down their cheeks. Jim seized the dog by the shoulders and flirted him over ; but, when he attempted to fall upon him and fill his mouth with snow, the animal wasn’t there, but with a crisp bark of enjoyment appeared on top of Jim. After that it was hard to tell which had the better of it, for they were almost hidden by the flying particles, and rolled and twisted and turned, the air full of legs, arms, and bodies, broken by yelps and merriment until, at last, Jim, covered from head to foot, rose to his feet, and brushed off the clinging masses, while Terror crouched in front and barked another invitation to more fun.

“ He’s too much for me,” said Jim, shaking the snow from his locks and adjusting his cap ; “ he isn’t very big, but he’s as strong as a horse. After

I've had a breakfast of Aunt Bridget's buckwheat cakes to-morrow, Terror, I'll tackle you again."

And repeating his good-bye to the couple, Jim ran out of the gate and hurried off to the home of Aunt Dorothy.

The next morning, before the sun had fairly risen, he dashed through Uncle Mike's gate, and stumbled over Terror, who purposely got in his way, and they were at it again harder than ever. It was a tremendous struggle, which lasted the whole length of the yard to the front door. It was amusing the number of times Terror got the arm or leg or shoulder of the boy between his restless jaws, and never once did he close them hard enough to cause the slightest pain, although Jim plainly felt the pressure. Had the dog so willed he could have killed the youth, but not once did he inflict the least hurt.

"I give up," said Jim, struggling to his feet, adjusting his cap, and brushing off the snow, as Aunt Bridget smilingly opened the door; "you're too much for me."

Now let us leave the memorable breakfast, accompanied by rugged health and overflowing spirits, and pass to three o'clock in the afternoon of that crisp, sunshiny day in midwinter. The situation was thus:

A bent form with fur cap, long, faded overcoat, and leaning on a buckthorn cane, was moving

feeble along the single street of Arundale, carrying an ordinary market-basket on his left arm. His face was fringed with gray whiskers, and the gait of the man bespoke his weakness and old age. Who could look without sympathy upon the picture of helplessness?

At the first corner stood two persons, slyly peeping around at intervals, as if anxious not to be seen. As they watched the slow progress of the old man, they chuckled and laughed and whispered to each other, as if it were one of the most amusing sights upon which they had ever looked.

The two persons were Lawyer Victor Hunt and Jim Winters, and on the same side of the street and between them and the old man stood three boys, Harry Michener, Washington Philbrick, and Walter Hodgkins, so intently watching the decrepit form that they saw nothing else.

The overcoat pockets of each boy were filled with hard-packed snowballs, and they were waiting for their victim to come within fair range.

CHAPTER IX.

THE VIRTUE OF "SOAKERS"

EVERY community is afflicted with one or more characters who are of no earthly use to themselves or any one else. It is a mystery how many of them live, for they are too lazy to work, are rarely or never known to earn a penny honestly, and yet they continue fat and well fed, and receive enough cast-off garments to dress better than many respectable working men.

The most noted example of the "loafer" in Arundale was William Schultze, better known as "Lazy Bill." It was he, who, reading the signs of what was coming, appeared from somewhere and sauntered down to where the three boys were impatiently waiting for Uncle Mike to come within range. Bill had his hands thrust in his pockets, and his unclean face expanded into a broad grin at the prospect of seeing an old man abused by a party of scamps.

Bill and the other spectators had but a few minutes to wait, when Harry, Washy, and Walter

saw their victim was "where they wanted him." Harry launched the first snowball, which, curving over diagonally across the street, struck the ground a couple of yards in front of Uncle Mike, who plodded along, as if unaware of what had been done. It was a poor throw.

Then Walter tried it, and his missile went far over the cap with its ear mufflers drawn tight, and the face so well concealed that only the spectacles, the point of the red nose, and the fringe of gray whiskers were visible. Still Uncle Mike moved on, as if he did not suspect any persons were within miles of him.

The third venture was by Washy, and accidentally he made a bull's-eye. Describing a beautiful parabola, the snowball dropped squarely upon the head of the old man, and must have hurt him badly. The boys instantly stopped throwing, shoved their hands in their pockets, laughed, whistled, and looked innocent, while "Lazy Bill" shook with laughter. He enjoyed it to the full.

And then a wonderful thing took place.

Uncle Mike calmly set his basket on the ground, and slid off the cover. The contents thus revealed consisted of twenty-three "soakers." He picked up two, which he held in his left hand, ready for use, while the third was grasped in his right. Seeing that he really meant to try to throw, the boys laughed harder than ever, and Lazy Bill was

so overcome with merriment that he could hardly keep his feet.

In the midst of their mirth, Harry saw something flit in front of his eyes, as if it were the wing of a bird. In the same instant a "soaker" landed on the forepiece of his cap with such force that he partly turned a backward somersault, and lay still, stunned and so dazed that he could not understand what had taken place.

Washy Philbrick turned to look at him, when a "soaker" crashed against his ear, and, with a howl of pain, he stumbled sideways across his fallen friend, and rolling over with his hands to the side of his head, he moaned:

"I'm killed! I'm killed! Somebody hit me with a cannon-ball!"

The terrified Walter Hodgkins thought the best thing for him to do was to run, and he did it, but even that did not save him. The third frightful missile caught him literally and figuratively "in the neck." He managed to keep his feet, though driven violently forward, and for a minute or two he was absurd enough to believe his legs were trying to keep up with the head which was several yards in advance. He continued running, and added his yells to those of Washy rolling about on the ground.

Lazy Bill was not so quick to comprehend things. He had thrown his head back, opened

his mouth to its widest extent, and was shaking with laughter, when a "soaker" shattered itself to fragments in the cavity, removed or loosened several teeth, and made him feel, as he afterward expressed it, as if he had been struck by a well-oiled lightning bolt. He ran for the nearest shelter, while Harry and Washy did the same, as soon as they could recover their feet, still pursued by the fearful missiles, one of which struck Harry in the back and jarred every bone, muscle, and nerve in his body. Still another, evidently aimed at Washy, passed harmlessly over his shoulder.

Six "soakers" in all were thrown, only one of which failed to land, but they routed the three boys and single man, and sent all flying in the wildest panic. Seeing his complete triumph, Uncle Mike carefully slid the cover back on his basket, ran his arm under the handle, and slowly and feebly resumed his plodding homeward.

And just beyond the next corner, Lawyer Hunt and Jim Winters were obliged to lean against the nearest support to save themselves from collapsing and sinking in the snow, overcome by merriment at what they had witnessed. It was the funniest thing they had seen in all their lives.

It was this occurrence which formed the mystery to which I referred at the opening of my story,



"UNCLE MIKE SLOWLY RESUMED HIS PLODDING HOMEWARD."

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for before the wintry sun went down that night every man and woman in Arundale knew of the astounding incident, and was talking about it. The wonderment and speculation were unbounded, for could the memory of man recall anything so totally beyond explanation?

Michael Doland was considerably past three-score and ten, slow of gait, bent and tottering, and with fast decreasing strength, and yet, standing fully a hundred and fifty feet away, he hurled in swift succession a half-dozen snowballs with the accuracy of rifle-shots and a force that was practically resistless. Lazy Bill lost three sound teeth; Harry Michener suffered from headache for several weeks; Washy Philbrick felt his bruises longer than that, while Walter Hodgkins believed nothing but his prompt flight saved him from a dreadful death. The proofs of the miraculous exploit were too tangible to be questioned.

It should be stated that the night on which Michael Doland soaked his twenty-odd snowballs in water, and laid them out to freeze, was so mild that the freezing was only partial. The missiles were not very hard, which was a fortunate thing for Lazy Bill and the boys, for it is almost certain that otherwise one or more of them would have received serious, if not fatal, injuries. Two things seemed certain: not only was Uncle Mike's prop-

erty safe against harm, but never again was he likely to be molested while walking quietly along the street or highway.

But what meant that sudden renewal of youth and vigour on the part of Uncle Mike? We pity poor Ponce de Leon, who hunted so long through the Florida groves for the spring of eternal youth, and we agree that the day of miracles passed long ago, but on what other theory can the incident I have described be explained? And yet such explanation is none at all.

Some of the curious ones stopped at Uncle Mike's house and asked him to clear up the mystery for them. He claimed to do it thus:

"Whin I raalised that the same spalpaans that broke into me garden was throwing snowballs at me, and that one nearly busted in the top of me head, I was that mad that I forgot I was owld, and fancied I was at Donnybrook agin, and I jist limbered up. That's all there was about it, and what mystery was there in *that?*"

A great deal. Who could believe Uncle Mike's theory, and, not believing, who was able to frame a better one to take its place?

In the middle of the excitement over the incident, George Michener, who was a student at Yale, came home to spend the Christmas holidays. He made claims to being an athlete, and had been trying for two years to secure a place on the base-

ball and football teams, and though he had not yet succeeded, he was hopeful.

When he saw his battered brother and heard the incredible story, he looked wise, and nodded his head, but said little. That afternoon, he quietly bought a rawhide, and just as it was growing dusk dropped in upon Lawyer G. Waldo Jones and explained the purpose he had in mind.

"Of course I can't challenge him to fight, for he's an old man, but his insolence has become intolerable. Why, Harry has been banged and abused by him to that extent that I believe he is permanently injured,—at least he will be if this thing is allowed to go on. I have dreaded of late to open the letters I receive from home."

"It *is* pretty rough, Michener, but I don't see how that old man can be stopped in his frightful course. So far, that is, since the first affair, he has been clearly within his legal rights. He did not throw any snowballs at Lazy Bill and the boys until the youngsters first attacked him."

"But he used 'soakers.' "

"Still, 'soakers' are made of snow, and the law does not recognise any distinction between them and honest snowballs. Since you have a new cowhide there, I presume you intend to chastise Uncle Mike."

"That's it, and I'll lay the whip around his shoulders so well that he won't put on so many

airs hereafter. I have a right to do that, Jones, as the defender of my younger brother, haven't I?"

"Speaking professionally, your proposed act is unlawful. Your brother is in no danger, and therefore requires no defender. Your rôle," added the lawyer, with a smile, "is rather that of an avenger, which the law does not recognise in these days, though feuds are quite common and seem to be tolerated in the South or Southwest."

"Suppose I give the old man a cowhiding, what would be the worst result to me?"

"If he chooses to make a complaint, you would be found guilty of assault,—in fact, you would admit the charge?"

"Certainly."

"You would probably be fined fifty or a hundred dollars."

"Is that all?"

"Isn't it enough? It may be less, and of course you would be bound over to keep the peace."

"Father would cheerfully pay a fine five times as great for the sake of having that scoundrel punished as he deserves."

"I have stated the situation correctly to you. When do you propose to make your social call upon Uncle Mike?"

"This evening, — right away."

"You are aware that he keeps a dangerous dog."

"I shall take my revolver with me, and, if the brute interferes, will shoot him."

"Avoid that if you can, for the possession of the pistol will tell against you. Lawyer Hunt will try to make it appear that you intended to shoot Uncle Mike."

"If he dares say that, I'll cowhide *him*."

"Don't enlarge your contract too much. Will you take any one with you?"

"Of course not; that would look as if I were in fear of the miscreant."

"Don't you think it possible that an old man, who can hurl snowballs with such tremendous effectiveness, has a good deal of muscular strength in his arms?"

"I hope he has; it will make matters more interesting if he offers resistance. You are not aware, Jones, that I am ranked as one of the best sparrings at Yale."

"You don't tell me!" exclaimed the lawyer, admiringly; "why, that will make the job an easy one."

"Disgustingly so."

"Well, all I have to say is that you need have no fear of the legal consequences of this little joke. I think I can offer you a good suggestion."

"What is it?"

"Uncle Mike, as I happen to know, does not take his dog with him when he goes from home. The animal is held in so much dread that he would be sure to get into trouble, and most likely would be shot. In the summer-time he spends his time in watching the garden, and in winter is generally kept tied in his kennel at the rear of the house, or dozes in the kitchen waiting for something to turn up."

"But what is your suggestion?"

"That you invite the old man to step out into the highway, where you can have a few words with him alone. Of course he will suspect nothing, and you will thus draw him away from the support of his dog. Then, with the coast clear, you can have your own fun undisturbed."

"The plan is a good one! I'll adopt it."

Now it is very clear to you, from this conversation, that Lawyer Jones did all he could to encourage George Michener in his assault upon Uncle Mike. Such was his purpose, and I must add something more. The lawyer was a shrewder man than might seem to be the case. He was one of the few, outside of Uncle Mike's family, who suspected the true explanation of the mystery of the "soakers." Although the counsel of the wealthy Mr. Michener, Lawyer Jones was indignant over the persecution of the harmless old man, who only

asked to be allowed to make his humble living for himself and wife in peace. The lawyer cunningly prodded the youth to carry out his mean purpose, because the former was morally certain of what the result would be.

When George Michener knocked at the door of Uncle Mike's home and requested him to come outside for a private talk, the old man was greatly surprised. In turn, he asked his caller to wait where he was for a few minutes, when he would join him. He did so, and the collision took place in the highway, without any spectators other than those who peeped through the windows and dimly saw what occurred in the gloom and growing darkness.

Less than fifteen minutes later, when Lawyer Jones walked beyond the village toward the house of Uncle Mike, he met a forlorn figure, with cap torn, clothes in tatters, face battered and crimsoned in spots, and the man himself barely able to totter along.

"Why, George, is that you?" demanded the amazed counsellor, "did Uncle Mike do this?"

"Uncle Mike," mumbled the victim, "there ain't any Uncle Mike."

"Who, then, was it?"

"He calls himself Uncle Mike, but he's the devil himself!"

CHAPTER X.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED

Now, although George Michener may have been satisfied with the explanation of the mystery as he gave it to Lawyer Jones, neither you nor I can accept it, for it certainly will not stand analysis.

On the night that Jim Winters made his third call at the humble home of Uncle Mike Doland, there was a fourth person present, Mike junior, a young giant twenty-two years old, who always visited his parents for a week or two during winter. He was employed in a hardware store in New York, where he was paid large wages, although he had not much work to do. His employers, who were wealthy, did this because of their admiration of the Hercules, who was the famous left fielder of the Invincible Baseball Club, and who, in his day, probably had no superior as a long and accurate thrower. Mike's employers were fond of the national game, and were proud to have the great player in their service when the ball season was over.

Many of Mike's throws from left field to the bases or home plate were wonderful. It was said of him that he could stand on third base and strike the breastpin of the man on first, four times out of five,—a distance of nearly 130 feet. Mike was temperate, good-natured, and popular, with much of the native wit of his parents, and was one of the highest salaried players in the league, for he was a fine fielder, batter, and runner.

At the meeting I have in mind, Mike held Jim Winters fascinated with his reminiscences of the famous games in which he had taken part, for Jim, like most American youths, was a great admirer of the sport, and a splendid boy player, as I shall soon illustrate to you.

When Mike learned of the petty persecutions to which his feeble father was subjected, he flamed with indignation. Springing from his chair, he donned his cap, and began buttoning his coat.

"What's the matter wid ye?" asked his mother.

"I'm going out to spank ivery one of them scamps; then I'll lick the father of aich for being the father of sich spalpaans, and if anybody objects I'll lick *him*. Before I git home I ixpect to do up ivery man in Arundale. I faal the need of ixercise, and it'll do me good."

"And it'll do some of the people thimsilves

more good ; they naad it," said his mother, who was quite pleased with the project.

"Hold on, Mike," interposed Jim, "I have a better plan than that."

"Ye have?" said the giant, looking curiously down on him ; "what might be the same?"

"Sit down, and I'll explain. Now, listen, all of you. Let's make a lot of 'soakers' to-night. To-morrow, Mike will put on his father's long gray coat, cap, and spectacles, we'll fix him up a set of gray whiskers, and redden the tip of his nose. Then he'll slip the market-basket over his arm, take his father's cane in his right hand, bend over his shoulders, and walk like a feeble old man. It won't be long before those boys will see him and open with their snowballs. Then I wonder what Mike will do with his 'soakers.'"

"Not a thing," replied the massive fellow, as delighted as a child over the prospect of such rare fun. The old couple were equally jubilant, and agreed that Jim was the brightest lad of his years in the whole country.

The general scheme being agreed upon, it was necessary to make careful preparations, and little difficulty was found in the way. That which caused the most trouble was the false whiskers. The material used was the stuffing from an old mattress, whose deep black was turned to white by means of thick whitewash. The result was not

very artistic, and the disguise was a clumsy one, so far as the whiskers were concerned. Met face to face in the daytime, any person would have recognised the awkward counterfeit.

But young Mike had many things to help him. First of all, no one was expecting anything in the nature of a disguise. When he had drawn on his father's old gray coat, pulled down his close-fitting cap, adjusted his spectacles, and then, bending over, moved feebly across the floor, bending most of his weight on the strong buckthorn, the imitation was a close one, and brought many compliments from the three who were watching and helping the young man to make up for his rôle.

Enough has been told for you to understand the affair between young Mike and Lazy Bill and the three boys, on the main road or street of Arundale. I repeat that it was very fortunate for them that the preceding night was so mild that the soaked snowballs only partly froze, for, hurled with their deadly force and accuracy by the great left fielder of the Invincibles, they must have done serious injury to the man and boys.

When George Michener called at the home of Uncle Mike, in the dusk of early evening, it was the old man himself who answered the knock. He was quick-witted enough to read the purpose of the student, but young Mike happened to be lying

in his room asleep. He was quickly aroused by his mother, and told the situation. The fear was that the trick would be detected, when the two came face to face, but the growing darkness helped, Michener was unsuspecting, and the next moment, after whipping out and swinging aloft his rawhide, he was not in condition to recognise anything. It was, perhaps, because of this that he declared his vanquisher to be the dreadful being named to Lawyer Jones.

One of the curious facts connected with the occurrence described is that its real explanation was not suspected at once by all the people of Arundale. Michael Doland, the younger, was at his parents' home for fully two weeks, and there was hardly a day on which he did not saunter down to the village to meet his acquaintances. Not once did one of them show by word or hint his suspicion of the truth. I am convinced that several knew that the splendid young man had acted in the place of his father, on the two occasions when those who vexed him were discomfited. If such were the case, it is probable their sympathy for Uncle Mike kept their lips mute.

Lawyer Jones was a better fellow than the reader may suspect, from what has been told of him. On the day that young George Michener was sufficiently recovered to return to Yale, his counsellor called upon Victor Hunt, and with the

door of the office locked the two held what might be called a jubilation.

"Of course I saw through the whole thing," said Mr. Jones, "when I heard of the tremendous 'soaker' bombardment. It was a physical impossibility that Uncle Mike could have done anything of the kind, and since that young giant of his was at home, and is one of the most wonderful throwers in the country, it must have been he, and no one else."

"It was extraordinary that George Michener was fooled, for he claims to be something of a ball player himself."

"I had a shiver of dread when he called to tell me he was determined to cowhide the old man."

"There was no cause to fear for Uncle Mike."

"It wasn't that ; what I dreaded was that George would change his mind and conclude *not* to chastise him. I was mean enough to do all I could to encourage his purpose, foreseeing the certain result, though young Mike made his punishment of the whipper-snapper more thorough than I expected. George never suspected one fact."

"What was that ?"

"In the first place, what could be more unspeakably mean and cowardly than for him to attempt to punish a man, more than three score and ten years old, for simply defending himself

against three brutal young scamps? What George did not know was that, if he had succeeded in chastising him, he would have been mobbed."

"You do not doubt that?"

"There is no room to doubt it. The sympathy universally is with Uncle Mike, as it should be, and not all of Mr. Michener's wealth would have saved his son from violence, had he been able to harm the old man. The Americans and English people love fair play, and they are determined to have it."

"But why are our neighbours so blind as not to suspect the truth?"

"The majority not only suspect but *know* it. They keep their lips closed, for fear that the young scamps will renew their annoyances after Mike leaves."

"Are they not likely to do so?"

"There is little or no danger. I have convinced Walter Hodgkins's father that his boy received only what he deserved, and that it is his duty to see that his boy attends school regularly and is kept at home nights. Mrs. Philbrick agrees with me that Washy is likely to be led to destruction by Harry Michener, unless they are kept apart, and she and her husband have decided to send their hopeful heir to a military school on the Hudson, that he may not only be properly trained, but escape the evil influence of young Michener.

"I have used the same strategy with Michener," added Lawyer Jones, with a laugh, "and shown him how important it is that he should remove his boy from the evil influence of Washy Philbrick. You know his family does not live here in the winter, but the boy likes the wild, unrestrained country life so well that his father allowed him to stay this year. My rôle is rather a delicate one, for if ever Michener and Philbrick become confidential or quarrelsome, they are likely to learn of my duplicity, but," exclaimed the lawyer, striking his breast tragically, "did mortal man ever have grander, loftier motives than mine?"

"They are certainly creditable."

The question whether Uncle Mike would have been pestered at any time after the departure of his son was never tested, for he died during the succeeding spring. The grand jury ignored the charges against him, and his end was peaceful and happy.

A strange coincidence was that Dorothy Fisher, the aunt of Jim Winters, breathed her last on the same day. Her death was sudden and unexpected. She had lived a quiet, Christian life, and was mourned by the whole community. Jim and his parents and sister Jennie were deeply afflicted by her loss, and her memory always remained fragrant with them. To Jim, because of her death, the associations connected with

Arundale were so sad that he never again visited the village.

Let us, therefore, follow him to his own home, for I think you will be interested in a number of things I have to tell about him.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT BEFELL DICK AND JO

DICK ASHMORE and Jo Egmont sat on the fence engaged in a philosophical discussion.

"I don't see any sense in this thanksgiving business," remarked Dick; "if a fellow wants to give thanks for what he's got, he ought to do it every day."

"That's what I think," assented his companion; "but the President and the Governor call on everybody to give thanks, instead of saying that them that has something to be thankful for are the right ones."

"I s'pose there must be a few such people in the world, but, Jo, you and me aren't among 'em. Everything has gone wrong with us. Mr. Hanaford, the teacher, promised a gold medal to the boy that was at the head of the spelling class the most times during the term. You and me know that meant Jim Winters, so what was the use of our trying? Jo, how many times were you at the head?"

"Twice, but it didn't take Jim long to spell me out of it. Let me see,—how did you make out, Dick?"

"I got there only once; I didn't try, for though you and me started ahead of Jim, I knew he would beat us out; *he's* the only one of us boys to give thanks."

"And look at the luck we had to-day! There was that shagbark hickory-tree that no one knew anything about except us; I looked at it two days ago, and the ground was covered with nuts. Then what happens? We sneak out there this Thanksgiving forenoon, each with a bag that we was sure of filling, only to find that some one has been ahead of us and gathered every nut; I'm disgusted," and Jo jumped down from the fence in anything but a pleasant mood.

"I know it was Jim Winters that got in the woods first and gathered those nuts. I s'pose we oughtn't to have waited so late in the season," added Dick, not quite convinced that fate was altogether to blame; "the nutting season has been over for some time, but what's the odds? Most of the nuts fell to the ground themselves and was waiting for us."

"Yes; and that isn't the worst of it; here's this big creek right in front of us: if we was on the other side, we shouldn't have to walk more than half a mile to get home, but now we

must tramp two miles down the creek to the bridge, and then back again almost as far. Why didn't the freeholders put a bridge here, so as to save us the trouble and hard work of a long walk?"

The foregoing extract from the discussion of Dick and Jo will show that those two sturdy boys of fourteen were in anything but an amiable frame of mind. They did not seem to feel that no one was blamable but themselves for Jim Winters's capture of the prize medal at school. They had as good and in fact a better start than he, for in drawing for places in the class both Dick and Jo drew numbers that placed them above him. If they had studied their lessons as hard as Jim, one of them must have won the prize.

As for the harvest of shagbark hickory nuts, they had any number of chances to gather the fruitage of that particular tree, but their laziness led them to put off the slight work until somebody stepped in and took the crop away from them.

And then, too, they forgot their vigorous health, their kind parents, the love of brothers and sisters, the excellent school, and their grand American birthright, and even complained of a walk of three or four miles, one of the best things in the world for two such lusty youths.

A bright idea flashed upon Dick, who was slightly the elder, though the size and strength of the two were about the same.

"Let's make a raft and pole across."

"Just the thing!" exclaimed his companion.

So they fell to work, not hesitating to take a half-dozen rails from Farmer Griffin's fence. Along the wooded creek lay a small log here and there, that had been dried in the sun until it was almost as buoyant as cork. These were rolled into the water, and floated to the place where the rails had been gathered. Then with their jack-knives they cut a number of withes, and fastened the parts of the float together with no little skill.

They did not forget several important facts: the creek was quite wide and very deep, and only a short distance below were Bushman's Falls, fully thirty feet high. Though both youths knew how to swim, neither could do so in those churning waters, where they once saw a deer perish while trying to escape from the pursuing hunter and dogs. But the current was sluggish, and they remembered that the stream had been crossed by others on rafts, and at a point nearer the falls than where they meant to make the venture. So they had no fear.

Each cut down and twisted off a small sapling, long enough, as they believed, to reach bottom in the deepest part of the creek, and, thus provided, stepped upon the raft. They were a little startled to note that their united weight almost sank it, and Jo was about to leap ashore, when Dick called to him that there was nothing to fear.

"It couldn't carry much more, but it's strong enough for us; don't you see it bears our weight here, so it will do so all the way across? We must look out not to step too far to one side at the same time, or it will tip over."

Taking their places with much caution, Dick pressed the end of his pole against the bank, and the awkward craft moved slowly out into deep water. It was an alarming proof of the depth of the stream that they were hardly free from the shore when each lad had to press his sapling downward for fully ten feet to reach bottom. Inasmuch as this was two-thirds the length of the poles, they felt some misgiving as to what they would do if the depth became greater. They were encouraged, however, by the discovery that for a time there was no change, and by vigorous use of the aids, they moved steadily across the creek.

"My gracious!" suddenly exclaimed Dick, who bent over in following his pole until his hands touched the surface of the water, "the bottom has dropped out."

Jo noticed at the same time that the raft was drifting toward the falls. Naturally the current was much stronger in the middle of the stream than at the sides.

"What shall we do?" asked Jo, in dismay.

"Use the poles for paddles," suggested the elder, sweeping the end of his through the foam-

ing water; "help all you can, and we'll fetch it."

Jo plied his pole with might and main, but no one needs to be told that a round stick is a poor sort of paddle, and one of the hardest tasks is to propel a craft by such means. The lads thought they were making more progress than was the fact, yet they might have crossed the dangerous stream but for an unexpected mishap.

The first alarm came to Jo, when he found he was sinking. Looking around for the cause, he saw that one of the withes had uncoiled because of its elasticity, and the raft was separating. He and Dick were drifting from each other, and not only that, but both had already sunk to their knees, and were still slowly going down. Some of the rails had become loosened, and, floating off, did not leave enough buoyancy to sustain either lad.

"Dick, we've got to swim!" called Jo, who, seeing there was no help for it, slid backward from the largest piece of wood, and, throwing away his pole, seized his support with both hands. Dick did the same, and found the water thrillingly cold.

"Whew!" he exclaimed, with a chattering of his teeth; "it's like ice; I daresn't try to swim in my clothes, Jo, and, if I take 'em off, I'll freeze to death."

Jo was in the same fix, and, as the only thing they could do, they renewed their efforts to make land by each using one hand as a paddle, while the other, being thrown around one of the small logs, kept the boy afloat. Despite their fright, they suffered intensely from the icy water, but no boys could have worked harder than they. Nevertheless, they were slowly advancing, when the terrifying roar of the falls broke upon their ears. Both glanced down stream, and saw they were within a few rods of the cataract. In his panic Dick let go of his support and tried desperately to swim to the bank, but quickly discovered that it was as he had feared,—his water-clogged garments and heavy shoes made it impossible to keep his head above water.

"I'm drowning! Oh, Jo, save me!" he called, as, despite his struggles, he sank from sight. Jo, although in an agony of fear, did not lose his presence of mind, but pushed the cork-like log on which he was resting toward his friend. When Dick's head came up the next moment, he was so blinded and strangling that he did not see the wood, though it was within arm's length. Another shove by Jo drove the end against his temple, as he was about to sink for the second time, and the frantic hands caught the support just in time to save him. Only a slight help is needed to keep one's head above water, and so long as the lad did

not try to climb upon the float, he was safe from sinking. He refrained from struggle, probably because he was too tired to make it.

The relief that came to Jo Egmont lasted but a moment. He saw that Dick had been saved for the instant, but he saw, too, that they were so near the edge of the falls that nothing could prevent their going over. Both gripped the weak support with all their strength, and, a minute later, over they went.

Although it was but a few minutes after Dick's escape from drowning, the new peril recalled his senses, and he clung to the slight support with might and main. The next instant there was a blinding swirl, a thunderous roar, as the boys felt themselves turning over and over, strangling, gasping, struggling, and never letting go of their meagre float, while they went down, down, down, until it seemed as if they were plunging to the centre of the earth itself.

But while holding their breath and blindly resisting, both youths caught a swallow of pure, blessed, life-giving air. They had been carried beyond the churning waters and foam at the foot of the falls, and were drifting through the calm waters below. When they regained their senses and were able to shake the moisture from their eyes, and look around, they saw what had occurred and where they were.

"Oh, Dick, we are saved!" was the joyful exclamation of Jo; "don't let go of the stick, and we can reach shore."

"You bet I won't," was the reply of Dick, as he held grimly on, and began paddling with his free arm. Jo joined in the effort, and, sooner than would be thought, their feet touched bottom, and they walked out on dry land.

But now that the struggle was ended, they felt the effects of the trying work, and, sinking down on the ground, lay panting and speechless for several minutes. Youth and health, however, rapidly assert themselves, and it was not long before they rose to a sitting posture, and soon after stood upon their feet.

Dick looked up at the roaring falls, and said, in an awed voice:

"Who would have thought we could come over them and live? What would you take, Jo, to try it again?"

"Nothing in the world would tempt me; I thought you were drowning when we were on the edge."

"And I was; if I hadn't caught hold of that stick, I should have been dead before we took the plunge. No boys ever went over them falls like us."

"I don't see how it was."

"Jo, I'm ashamed of what I said a little while ago."

"So am I. We were two mean fellows that have come out of this scrape much better than we had a right to expect. The next time we'll stick to the bridge. I guess, Dick, that we have as much reason for thanksgiving as any chaps in the country. What do you think?"

Dick nodded his head with a vigour that left no doubt of his views. Since their clothes were saturated, they kept off the dangerous chill that might have followed by walking briskly to their homes. Jo had the shorter distance to go, Dick living a half-mile beyond. The stories which they told their families naturally caused excitement, but since both were safe, every heart was grateful, and it may be said that in each household all partook with happy hearts of the Thanksgiving dinner that was awaiting them. No serious results followed the mishap, and though it was an interesting subject among the boys for weeks, it was soon forgotten, for the moods of youth are changeful, and too often the best of emotions pass away like the morning dew.

CHAPTER XII.

A TRIFLE THAT MEANT A GREAT DEAL

You have noticed that when Dick Ashmore and Jo Egmont held what may be called their philosophical discussion, while sitting on the fence beside the creek, they referred more than once to their playmate and our old friend, Jim Winters. The incident itself occurred during the autumn of the year following the first visit we have described as made by Jim to Arundale.

It was on a warm afternoon, in the month of August of the succeeding year, that four boys were carefully threading their way through a piece of woods near the Midvale schoolhouse, where they had spent the long hours in study, as they had been doing for months past. You know that in the cities the months of July and August, and sometimes a part of June and September, are given over to vacation, but when your grandparents were young they were not treated so generously. The practice was to allow a couple of weeks in mid-

summer, half Saturdays, and perhaps, if the teacher were so inclined, Christmas Day. I have attended a full session of school on the Fourth of July.

Had you seen the lads I am telling you about, you would have known something unusual was in the air. School had closed not only for the day and week, but the fortnight's vacation had just begun, and they were naturally in high spirits because of the long play spell before them. Two weeks! When they thought of it, they could hardly keep from throwing their hats in the air and shouting with delight.

At first they hurried forward side by side, laughing and talking with one another and laying plans for every day of the vacation that opened like a view of fairy-land before them. They cannot be blamed for feeling happy, for they were strong and rugged, and had studied hard, so that the rest was fairly earned.

But as they drew near the farther edge of the wood, their voices sank to low tones, and they peeped here and there, for all the world as if they were doing wrong and much afraid of being caught at it. They glanced toward the tall stalks of corn that could now be seen beyond the few trees in front. It was clear that the chief fear lay in that direction.

Now, as I have no wish to excite your curiosity or to affect any mystery in the little incident I

have set out to tell, I will say that these four boys had started out to steal. They had known for weeks of a patch of melons in the corn-field of Deacon Bolus, and this visit had been planned some time before. Deacon Bolus was a thrifty farmer, famous for his fine crops, not only of grain and vegetables, but of fruit. His cherries, apples, pears, peaches, and grapes were better than those of his neighbours, and he never had any trouble in selling them for good prices.

Mr. Bolus was surly and stingy. He kept a big, cross dog, which he always set upon any man or boy who dared to pluck his fruit. He even had been known to fire his gun, loaded with fine shot, at persons who made him angry. No boy ever asked him for a part of the product of his trees, because he knew he would be refused. But the farmer had the right to say "no" to all who went near him, and, though you and I would have been more generous, the deacon cannot be blamed for his course.

The melon patch was in the corn-field near the woods. When the boys stopped among the trees on the edge of the forest, and peeped forth, they could see the long running vines, the scant, narrow, and wilting leaves, and in a score of places the huge, oblong melons, many of them more than a foot in length and almost as thick. In some places only the tops of the dark green fruit

showed, while in other spots the whole luscious melon dozed in the ripening sun.

One monstrous specimen made their mouths water. It was near the middle of the patch and was fully two feet long. The boys had never seen so large a one. Dick Ashmore discovered it a few weeks before, and he brought the other boys to the edge of the wood that they might enjoy the sight. Since that first glimpse, they had come to the same place every day, except Sundays, to admire the delicious fruit. They knew when it would be dead ripe, and fixed upon the last day of school to take it from its brittle fastening on the vine, carry it into the wood, and then have a feast such as they had not known for many a day.

None knew better than they the dull, luscious sound the melon would give, when they thumped its bloated side with their knuckles, and more times than can be guessed they had burst open in their minds the green coat, and laid bare the sweet crimson juiciness, with the small black, glistening seeds, while they ate to their fill of the mealy heart, that melted in their mouths.

The hour fixed upon for capturing the prize had come, and the boys halted on the edge of the field, in the fringe of cool shadows, where they could take to flight the moment danger appeared.

Their hearts beat fast, for to them the business

was important indeed. They knew of the cross dog that Deacon Bolus kept, and that had a way of roaming about the farm, and was likely therefore to pounce upon intruders when least expected. Their greatest fear, however, was of the deacon himself, for as the time for gathering the fruit approached, he grew more vigilant. No doubt he looked at his melon patch every day, and this might be the very hour for him to stop there on his rounds. It would never do to be seen by him.

But the boys meant to be safe. Keeping in the cool shadow, they talked in guarded tones.

"If he comes, it will be from the house," said Dick Ashmore, "and we must watch that part of the field."

"What is the best way to do it?" asked Johnny Marvin, the youngest of the party.

"I have been studying this thing ever since the first time I set eyes on that melon," replied Dick; "the deacon always comes out of his front gate, walks up the road to the corner of the corn-field, climbs the fence and then moves this way. Now, Johnny, you must stoop down along the side of the fence and keep sharp watch. If you see him coming, whistle, and we'll run."

"I'll do that," said Johnny, very glad that it fell to the lot of some one else to lug off the heavy melon; "the minute I catch sight of him I'll whistle and run for life."

"Be sure you whistle loud enough for us to hear you," said Jo Egmont ; "but it may be that he has already left the house and is in the corn-field. If that's so Johnny won't see him."

"But you fellows will," replied the youngster, with a twinkle of his eyes ; "s'pose he comes from the other side of the corn-field?"

"I've been thinking of that, too," replied Dick, "and it bothers me more than anything else. I've got it! You, Jo, can go down yonder to the left, where the corn-field ends. Stand behind a tree and look out for him from that side. It seems to me we've got things pretty well fixed now, boys," added Dick, with an air of relief and a smile at the thought of what was coming.

Jim Winters, who was standing back a few paces, now spoke for the first time.

"You're going to steal the melon, Dick?"

"Yes; unless *you* want to do it."

"No, you can carry it; such a big thing weighs a good deal and doesn't have a handle to it like a basket."

"Don't be afraid; I'll get it here easy enough, and then we'll take turns till we reach a spot where it'll be safe to sit down and feast. Oh, my!"

Dick made a sucking, gurgling sound with his lips, closed his eyes, and shook his head over the mental picture of what was coming.

"Are you sure you have every point watched, Dick?" asked Jim Winters.

"I can't think of any other, — can you? The deacon must enter the field from the road or t'other side. Johnny and Jo will look out for him, and, if he comes, one of 'em will be sure to see him. It may be," continued Dick, "that he'll take it in his head to tramp through the woods. Jim, you'll have to watch for that. Then we shall have every point covered."

The other three boys had noticed that Jim acted queerly on the way. He was generally full of fun and sport, but his looks, words, and manner were for all the world like those of a boy that had something on his mind. His bright, handsome face was more serious than usual, when he said :

"You have set a good watch on the corn-field, and you think no one besides can see what Dick is doing, when he picks up that melon and runs into the wood with it. But you are sure to be caught!"

This strange remark caused every one to look wonderingly at Jim. They were silent, but their faces were full of questioning. He said, quietly :

"Boys, it won't be hard to dodge Deacon Bolus, but what about *Him*? Can you fix things so *He* won't see you?"

As Jim Winters asked the question in a low, grave voice, he pointed with his forefinger to the sky. The question and gesture said everything.

The words were fitly spoken. All three kept their eyes on the youth, each waiting for one of the others to speak.

Jim saw Dick Ashmore swallow a lump in his throat, and, backing away, he leaned against the oak behind him and asked, in a weak voice :

“ What put that into your head, Jim ? ”

“ Haven’t *you* thought of it ? ” was the question in turn.

“ Yes ; I’ll own up that it has bothered me. Several times, when I lay in bed, my conscience troubled me, and I made up my mind not to touch the melon. But when the sun rose next morning, and all of us were so jolly, and I had passed along the wood here and got a peep at it and had seen how fast it was growing, I felt different, and determined to have my feast ; but what made you come along, Jim, if you didn’t mean to help ? ”

“ I never meant to help steal it or to allow you to do so. I intended to do just what I have done, but I don’t know whether it was the right thing or not.”

“ Well, you *are* right,” said Dick, with a sigh of relief ; “ don’t you agree with me, boys ? ”

“ I feel the same way,” added Johnny Marvin, heartily.

“ How is it with you, Jo ? ”

Jo was inclined to hold off. His side glance at the big, ripe fruit, lying on the sandy soil in the

sun, showed that the temptation had not yet been put behind him.

"There must be a hundred melons there; old Bolus won't miss one; do you think it would be so *very* bad if we took one not so big? It couldn't make any difference to him."

"It would be right enough, Jo, if you could make it anything but stealing; can you do *that*?"

The boy was puzzled by this home question. He dug his bare toes into the leaves and was silent. None of the others spoke, and, feeling that he must say something, Jo muttered, with his gaze on the ground:

"Of course it isn't right. Do you want one of us to go to Deacon Bolus, and ask him to give us a melon?"

"That's the right thing to do, unless we offer to buy it, and I guess that's the only way we can get the feast we have been talking about so long."

But purchase was out of the question, since the four boys together had not enough money to make a respectable offer.

Dick Ashmore came to the relief of Jo Egmont by saying, with something of his old-time buoyancy of manner:

"Jim's right; I'm glad he stopped us before we stole the melon, though we're just as bad as if we took it, because we *wanted* to."

"That's true, but you don't feel so now, and I

am sure none of you will ever again come so near stealing as you did to-day."

"I'm sure of that, too," assented Jo, with a heartiness that proved he had gained the victory in the struggle that had been going on in his mind ; "come, boys, let's leave."

He led the way toward the highway, a hundred yards distant, by which they could walk to their homes. Their steps were elastic and more joyous than when they were sneaking among the trees, peeping around on all sides to make sure no one saw them. Nothing gives one so springy and happy a movement as an approving conscience.

They had not yet reached the road when all four were startled by the figure of a man coming toward them from the highway. He had a huge dog with him, and carried a gun over his shoulder.

One glance showed him to be Deacon Bolus, the owner of the melon patch. He looked at them so sharply that they knew he was suspicious at finding them so near his property. It even seemed as if he scanned their cheeks for signs of melon juice.

Jim Winters raised his hat.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Bolus."

The other lads nodded feebly, and watched the dog with distrust, for his looks were not friendly. The deacon, without replying to their salutation, gruffly asked :

"What are you boys doing here?"

"We took a ramble in the woods, sir, after school, and are going home."

"Have you been in my melon patch?"

"No, sir; we don't want melons bad enough to steal them."

"Umph! I wouldn't trust you out of my sight."

"Well," said Jim, who was speaking for his friends, "we have been out of your sight; we came by your patch, and it did look nice, but not one of us would steal *anything*."

"Fine talk when you meet me with my dog and loaded gun. It wouldn't be safe for you to try any of your tricks. Bowser and I are on the watch all the time, and the boy or man that touches a melon of mine will suffer; don't forget that!"

Jim hoped the deacon would present them with one of the small specimens, which he could well spare, but it was not his nature to do such a thing. It would be a pleasant ending to this incident if I could tell of so generous an act, but the boy who does that which is right in the hope of being paid therefor deserves no credit.

A far better payment came to the four boys than could have been given by a dozen such feasts as they had in mind. As they climbed the fence and went homeward, their consciences told them they had done right, and no happiness equals that.

Jim Winters had proved his moral courage, and, besides that, he bubbled over with good nature and a love for sport. He was ready at any time to run a race, engage in a wrestling bout, or any test of physical skill. He was the best ball player of his years I ever saw (and by and by I am going to describe the most memorable game of his life), and to sum up, he had all the fun he could possibly get, and yet, if there ever was a genuinely "good" boy, it was he.

One sultry summer afternoon I became so drowsy over my lesson that I laid my head on my book and went to sleep. I have no means of knowing how long I slumbered, but what wakened me was a tickling at the base of the nose, which, in a dim, vague way, I believed to be caused by a fly. I sniffed several times, but it kept coming back. Finally, without opening my eyes, I flapped my head over and lay on the other ear.

Just as I was dozing off, the titillation came again. Then I banged at the fly, striking my nose so hard that I was awakened. As I opened my eyes, I heard several giggles around me, and, looking here and there, saw half the girls and boys laughing behind their books. The only serious face was Jim Winters's. He sat next to me, and appeared to be so absorbed in working out a problem on his slate as to see nothing of what was going on elsewhere.

I looked suspiciously at him. I knew some boy had been wriggling the point of a feather along the base of my nose, and the question was whether it could have been Jim. I gazed from one face to the other, but no eyes met mine. All were interested in their books whenever I tried to catch their glances.

Accidentally I turned toward the teacher. His eyes flitted away like a flash, but I saw a twitching at the corners of his mouth. The whole truth then broke upon me. Jim Winters was the one that had been amusing the school at my expense, and Mr. Hanaford, from his seat at the other end of the room, did not interfere, because he enjoyed it as much as the pupils, whom he did not permit to see the fact.

One noon Jim was sauntering toward school on his way from dinner. Jennie, his sister, several years younger than he, had returned before him, and he was alone. It was nearly time for the bell to ring, but he was so close to the building that he knew he could reach it in time by a little spurt of speed. As the day was quite warm, he did not hurry. Turning the corner, not more than a hundred yards from the playground, he saw at once that something unusual was going on. The boys were crowded together and surging back and forth, shouting and pushing one another in their efforts to get closer to the centre of the

tumult. The cause was plain; two of the lads were fighting like wildcats. Their hats were off, their eyes gleaming, their faces crimson, as they struck and tugged and pushed and pulled and panted in their fierce efforts to hurt each other.

It was a sad sight, but not more so than the action of their classmates, nearly all of whom were urging on the fighters by encouraging and tantalising cries. When the two showed any signs of stopping, some of the boys would push them against each other and thus rouse them anew. It was the spirit that reigned during the gladiatorial days and which still keeps pugilism alive among people who claim to be civilised.

Jim saw that one of the boys was Hugh Carroll, a regular bully, and the other Dick Ashmore. Breaking into a run, he forced his way through the throng and between the fighters. Catching Hugh by the neck, he flung him several paces away, while Dick was hurled so violently in the other direction that he turned a backward somersault.

With flashing eyes, Jim demanded :

“What do you mean by fighting?”

“He struck me first,” replied Hugh, who, in his anger, began edging around to get at Dick, who climbed nimbly to his feet.

“And he called me names,” retorted Dick, “and he’s been doing it till I won’t stand it any longer.

I don't care if he is bigger than me, I ain't afraid of him ; let me have another show and he won't call me any more names."

"No, you don't," said Jim, shoving him back ; "keep your distance, Hugh, or I'll *make you !*"

"What business is it of yours?" called Jo Egmont, echoing the feelings of several other larger youths. "It isn't your quarrel, let 'em fight it out ; keep your hands off or we'll lick you."

"You will, eh ?"

Jim Winters whipped off his coat like a flash, and up went the clenched fists in front of his breast.

"Now, come on ! I'll fight the whole crowd ; and Dick and Hugh, if you touch each other again, I'll knock both of you into the middle of next week !"

CHAPTER XIII.

FOR TRUTH'S SAKE

ALTHOUGH Jo Egmont and two of the large boys made a threatening movement, they did not attack Jim Winters. They knew the force of his blows and knew, too, that the first one who came within reach would receive a lesson he would not forget for many a day. It was likely to be the same with the second and third, and so on indefinitely, for Jim Winters meant every word he said, and was prepared.

It may have been something in the attitude of the brave Jim, as he confronted the whole party and dared them to approach, which appealed to the better nature of the larger boys. It happened, too, at the critical moment, that one of the younger lads, who had run down to the bend in the road, called out :

“The teacher's coming !”

“If we don't fight any more will you promise not to tell ?” asked Hugh Carroll, sidling up to Jim, as they began moving in the direction of the schoolhouse. Hugh held the teacher in great fear.

"Yes; I'll make that promise, provided you stop teasing Dick and mean by what you say that you don't intend to finish the fight some other time."

"That's what I mean, Jim, and I will never lie to you, though I do to old Hanaford sometimes."

"Is that the agreement, Dick?" asked Jim, turning to the other fighter.

"I'm willing," was the sullen reply; "if he lets me alone, I'll let him alone."

A stranger passing the playground just then would have said that such a thing as a quarrel could never take place among those boys. Hugh Carroll and Dick Ashmore were walking beside each other, and arranging that, whatever came, neither would betray the other to the teacher.

The latter would have suspected nothing but for one or two expressions that he overheard. Mr. Hanaford was an observant man, and, by the time he entered the schoolhouse and picked up the bell to ring it, he knew a fight had taken place, and he determined to learn the truth. Nothing was publicly said until the time came for dismissal.

Meanwhile, he had questioned several of the girls, but none of them was near enough to the scene to help him in his quest for knowledge. Then, when hearing the lessons of some of the smaller boys, one at a time, he made more inquiries. The result was what he might have

expected ; all declared they knew nothing about any fight. One had heard something said of such a thing, but no names were given.

A larger boy who was examined said he was sure it was a mistake, for he had been on the grounds during all the noon recess, playing tag and other sports, and he had seen no blows struck. If he had he would be quick to tell Mr. Hanaford all about it, because he thought it the duty of every boy to do that, for fighting was very wicked.

The lad who made this frank avowal to the teacher was Hugh Carroll.

When the hush just before dismissal rested on the school and all eyes were turned expectantly toward Mr. Hanaford, he said :

"I have learned, by what means it is unnecessary to state, that during the noon recess to-day, two pupils engaged in fighting. All of you know that fighting is against the rules. I command the lads who fought to step forward."

As the teacher spoke, he laid his hand meaningly on the long switch that rested on top of his desk. The stillness was unbroken and not a boy moved. Roving with his eyes up and down the room, if Mr. Hanaford had tried to pick out a half-dozen youths of whose innocence he was certain, Hugh Carroll and Dick Ashmore would have been among them.

"Very well," remarked the teacher, whose tem-

per was rising at what he believed was a plot to defeat him, "since no boys seem to have taken part, I shall question each in turn. I am sure I have no lad in school who will lie."

This declaration came very close to being a falsehood itself, for the instructor must have known that among his pupils was more than one who had little regard for the truth.

"Did you engage in a fight to-day?"

This was the question that he put to each boy in turn, and to which he demanded a positive reply. When it had gone around the room, the unanimous response had been, "No, sir." The sad truth was clear that among the lads were not only the two fighters, but the same number, at least, of liars.

"Did you *see* any boys fighting?"

This was the second question that started on its circuit of the room, and to which the same answer was given until it had travelled two-thirds of the way around. Then it reached Jim Winters.

"Yes, sir; I did," was his prompt answer.

The teacher knew that this boy would not tell an untruth, and he was exultant over the certainty of getting the information he was seeking without going further.

"Ah, you saw two lads fighting?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were *you* one of the boys?"

Jim looked reprovingly at his teacher and replied, with dignity :

“ I answered that question some minutes ago.”

“ Very well ; now I order you to give me the names of the boys whom you saw fighting this noon.”

“ I parted them and they promised me they would fight no more, if I would not tell of them. I gave them my promise not to do so.”

Several of the large boys smiled at this answer of Jim. The smiles brought an angry flush to the face of the teacher, for he began to fear he was to be baffled, after all.

“ You had no right to make such a promise ; you should have come to me with a report of the occurrence at once.”

“ I am not a telltale, and I do not wish to dispute with you, Mr. Hanaford,” said Jim, respectfully, “ but, as I told you, the boys made the promise not to fight again, upon my pledge not to report them.”

“ Well,” replied the teacher, his voice tremulous with rage, “ a bad promise is better broken than kept ; you *must* tell me their names.”

“ I shall not do so,” was the firm reply of the youth, whose face grew slightly paler under the cruel wrong that threatened him.

“ Do you refuse ? ” thundered the instructor, taking his switch from his desk.

"If I obeyed you, I should tell a lie, and there is no person in the world who can make me do that ; I will die first."

Strange that the teacher was not thrilled by the manly reply of Jim Winters. Throughout the stirring but brief conversation, Jim had not shown the least defiance or anything in the nature of insolence. He was always respectful, and nothing could be clearer than that he was acting from a conviction of duty.

Justice to the teacher, however, moves me to say that he would have respected the moral heroism of Jim had the circumstances been different. But Mr. Hanaford was a man of quick temper, and often did things under the spur of passion, of which he bitterly repented in his cooler moments. He was angered by his failure to get the facts, but far more irritated by the smiles on the faces of several of the larger pupils. Their pleasure over the prospect of his defeat angered him, and intensified his resolution to outwit them.

I wish I could record at this point that Hugh Carroll and Dick Ashmore, seeing the danger of their friend, manfully went forward and confessed themselves the culprits, taking upon their shoulders the punishment they deserved, and relieving Jim from suffering for the wrong-doing of others. No doubt a good many boys would have done that, but I am afraid a greater number

would not, in the hope of escaping the severe whipping sure to follow. The fighters were that kind of youths.

"I give you the choice of telling me the names of the boys," said the teacher, coming down in front of his desk, switch in hand, his face pale and his voice vibrant with anger, "or of taking their punishment yourself."

"I will take their punishment."

"Step out on the floor."

Jim rose to his feet and walked into the open space where the large stove stood during winter and confronted his teacher.

"I give you one more chance to do as I command," said the latter, impelled by the knowledge that even this act of cruelty would not enable him to reach the guilty ones.

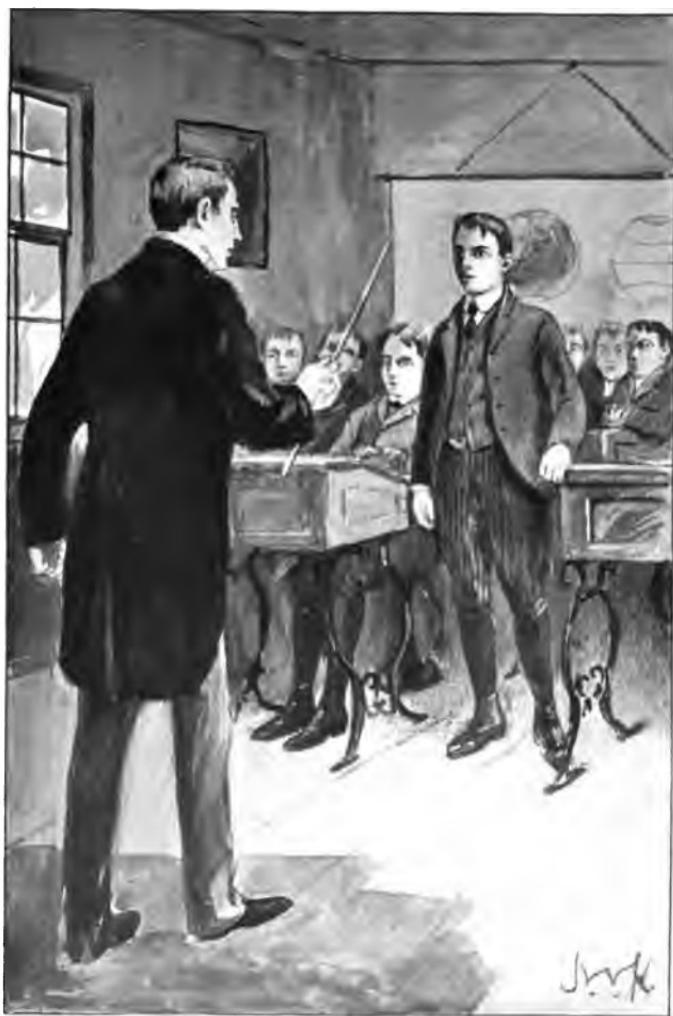
"I have given you my answer, Mr. Hanaford, and never will change it; if you think I deserve punishment for refusing to tell a lie, I have nothing more to say."

"Very well; take off your coat."

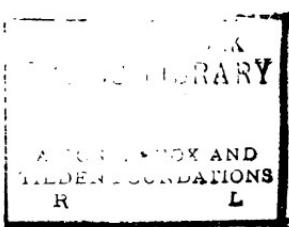
Jim started to obey, when, to the astonishment of every one in the room, he paused abruptly, closed his lips, and buttoned up the garment.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the teacher, more incensed than ever.

"I have come out on the floor as you ordered, but I do not think it my duty to help you in-



"**I WILL TAKE THEIR PUNISHMENT.'**"



flict this great wrong. I refuse to take off my coat."

Then the blows descended with all the nervous viciousness that the strong arm of the teacher could put into them. One, two, three, ten, and then the gad broke in two, the upper portion swishing across the room and out of the open door.

Jim stood it like the hero he was. The blows hurt, every one of them, for at that season his coat was thin; but he never flinched, nor did a tear moisten his eye. Once the sound of a girl's sobbing was heard and glancing sideways, he saw his little sister Jennie crying out of sympathy for him. For a single moment, he threatened to break down, but he overcame the weakness and waited until the teacher was exhausted.

"Now go home and prepare for the same thing to-morrow and for every day until you are ready to obey me."

And then school was dismissed.

There was not a boy or girl present who did not pity and admire Jim Winters. He felt that Hugh Carroll and Dick Ashmore had acted the part of shameless cowards in lying themselves out of punishment, but he did not utter a word in the way of reproof. Others, however, did. The two were rebuked by so many that they became sullen and took refuge in the declaration that

Jim brought it all on himself by refusing to tell a falsehood. Any boy, they insisted, would have done as they, and I am afraid that, to a certain extent, they were truthful in that respect. Jim gave them one reproving look when he bade them good-bye at the point where the roads forked.

"Jennie," said he, when he and his sister turned into the gate leading to their home, "please don't tell father or mother anything about the trouble."

"It was a shame!" exclaimed the little one. "Father ought to know it, he is one of the trustees and will have Mr. Hanaford discharged."

"You will please me very much by doing what I ask."

"I'll do anything for you, brother," she replied, slipping her chubby hand into his; "but he said he would whip you again to-morrow, if you did not tell him who the boys were that had been fighting."

"He will not punish me again."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NEXT DAY

JENNIE WINTERS, as a matter of course, kept her promise, though she yearned to tell her parents of the cruel outrage her loved brother had suffered. Mr. Winters was a just man, who asked no favouritism for his children, but he knew their rights and would not permit any injustice to be done them.

An air of oppression rested on the school all through the following day. Jim did his best to throw it off at noon and recess by starting several games of sport, but the part taken by the others was forced. Mr. Hanaford, too, was grave and reserved. To many he seemed unusually indulgent. He excused a number who failed in their tasks, and was patient in giving help to other laggards. What struck the boys who knew the facts as strange was that Hugh Carroll and Dick Ashmore, the real culprits, were specially favoured in that respect. Hugh made a total failure in his arithmetic and Dick missed every word but one that came to him in the spelling class. Many a

time they had been called up and whipped for similar lapses (for in the olden days the teachers believed that to spare the rod was to spoil the child), and never were allowed to go home until they had learned their lessons after school.

But this time Mr. Hanaford closed the book, and said with a smile that he was sure they would do better on the morrow. The other boys did not know what to make of it.

Once more the hush settled upon the pupils, as they sat with books ready and folded hands, awaiting the order for dismissal. In the midst of the profound stillness, Mr. Hanaford said, addressing the whole school :

“Boys and girls, I have a duty to perform ; I have done a great wrong, and I wish to undo it so far as I can. Two boys engaged in fighting yesterday. I was provoked beyond endurance at my failure to learn who they were, and at the fact that not only they, but others, persisted in telling me falsehoods. James Winters owned that he knew who the guilty ones were, but refused to name them, because he had given his promise not to do so. I punished him for his refusal. I did him a great wrong ; I am exceedingly sorry for it, and, James, having done you that wrong in the presence of the whole school, I now, before all the boys and girls, ask your pardon. Are you willing to forgive me ?”

Poor Jim! When he assured his sister that the teacher would not punish him again it was because he was certain that Mr. Hanaford's sense of justice would prevent his doing so. But he had counted on nothing like this. He was a brave boy, but his handsome face twitched, and, though he struggled hard, he could not keep back the tears.

Mr. Hanaford had walked down from behind his desk and stood in front of the young hero, as if awaiting his reply. Jim could not speak for a minute. Then, mastering his emotion, he rose to his feet, extended his hand, and said, in a choking voice:

"I — forgive — you — Mr. Hanaford; I knew you would be sorry for it."

"So I am, from the bottom of my heart," responded the teacher, grasping his hand, "sorry and ashamed, for it was another proof of the need every person has of becoming master of himself. Like many of you boys, I have a quick temper, which has brought me many hours of sorrow and regret. I have striven hard to control it, but do not always succeed. Take lesson from me, my dear pupils, and learn to keep your tempers well in hand. But I am not quite through."

He stepped back, and then Hugh Carroll and Dick Ashmore, who had been fidgeting in their seats and trying hard to keep from sobbing outright, walked forward to the middle of the room.

"Jim," whimpered Hugh, "you oughter knock our heads off, 'cause we used you so mean, but we're sorry, and can — can — can you forgive us?"

"That's what I want to say," added Dick, swallowing the choking lumps in his throat, "but I can't quite get the hang of it —"

And what did the youngster do but begin gouging his eyes with his forefingers, while he cried loud enough to be heard across the playground? Not only that, but several of the girls gave way, among them Jennie Winters. More than one big boy, too, cleared his throat and looked blinking out of the window.

It wrenched Jim's feelings again, but he had become the coolest one in the room. He had grown used to the strange situation, and that perfect mastery of his temper, gained long before, gave him an advantage possessed by no one else.

"Why, Hugh and Dick," he said, with his winning smile, laying a hand on the shoulder of each in turn, "it's all right; I haven't any feeling against you. Think no more about it."

"You may be seated now, boys," said the teacher, walking slowly back to his chair, where he faced the school once more.

"I must add," he continued, "that Hugh and Richard came to my house last night and confessed their great wrong. They said they could never be satisfied until I had punished them before the

school just as hard as I punished James yesterday. I asked them to tell no one else what had taken place, and promised to arrange matters this afternoon ; I trust I have done so."

Dick took his fingers from his eyes, and looked across the room in an expectant way at his teacher.

" You've forgot something, Mr. Hanaford."

" What's that ? "

" You haven't licked me and Hugh, — that's a part of the bargain."

" I didn't tell you last night that I should whip you ; I said I should arrange matters ; I think I have done so ; after your manly act, I should sooner suffer myself than punish you. The result of James's noble course has been to make me ashamed of myself, and to resolve, with the help of God, to avoid everything of the kind in the future. It has made better boys of Hugh and Richard, and I am sure produced a blessed effect upon us all. Let us never forget the lesson. School is dismissed."

How many of my young readers have ever thought of the power of example ? No sermon ever preached has so much influence for good as an honest, upright life. The worst of men respect one whose acts agree with what he professes. They judge others, not by what they claim to believe, but by what they do. When boys and girls are kind, forgiving, truthful, and resist temptation,

CHAPTER XV.

“SLIDE, JIM! SLIDE!”

DOES any boy reader of these pages need to be told that the most popular out-door sport in this country is the game of baseball? Not only that, but it is sure to remain the favourite for years to come. There is that in the quick work, the keen eye, the accurate throwing, the swift running, the strategic pitching and batting, the snap and “go” of the whole thing, that renders it the ideal game of American youth, though it must be confessed that football is growing in favour.

The school that Jim Winters and the rest of us attended when boys had one of the best baseball nines in all the country round. While one or two were weak players, and several only fair, the majority were unusually skilful. Jim was the pitcher, and he was a wonder in his way. At the close of one of the stirring games, a stranger, who closely watched its progress, called him aside, and taking his hand said, with much impressiveness :

“Young man, you have a brilliant future before you.”

"I am not sure I understand you," replied Jim, with a blush.

"I am manager of the Vesuvius club, and am looking for good timber; you are too young to enter the professional ranks for two or three years, but if you continue to improve, I shall be glad to offer you an engagement. Here is my card, and you may expect to hear from me in the future."

Jim took the card and looked at it.

"How much do you think I should be likely to earn?"

"That's hard to say, since you may fall away, but, if you improve as I believe you will, you are sure of a thousand dollars at least for the season."

"I thank you for your good opinion, but ten times that sum would be no temptation to me to enter the professional ranks."

Mr. St. Clair (that was the name on the card) looked at him in astonishment. Evidently he had never heard anything like it. Jim explained.

"I am fond of the game because of the sport that is in it, but to give ten or a dozen of the best years of my life to baseball would be a sacrifice for which I could never be repaid. I should have to retire from the business when I ought to be well along in some profession, and would be only a nuisance to my friends and of little use to myself."

"But think of the glory — "

"That kind of glory is nothing to me. I beg you in making up a list of likely candidates to leave me out, thanking you all the same."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" muttered Mr. St. Clair, as he walked away.

I should have explained that we boys lived in what is known as the Midvale district, which was a fairly populated country neighbourhood. At the Corners were a hotel, a church, and the schoolhouse, beside several dwellings. Four miles distant was the thriving town of Oakdale, with some three thousand inhabitants. It had a fine academy, and its baseball nine was the great rival of ours. The victory swung back and forth between the two clubs, which could hardly have been more evenly matched. During the summer following the incident told in the preceding chapter, it was arranged that we were to play three games for the championship. Our opponents won the first game by a single run, and we took the second by the same margin. The deciding contest was fixed for Saturday in July, and was to be played on our grounds, at the rear of the hotel.

Never was such excitement known in that country neighbourhood. It seemed as if the place for miles around was drained of its inhabitants, while Oakdale was in truth a deserted town. The people came in carriages, on horseback, and on foot. All of Jim's folks were on hand, as were

the members of my family, and those of the other players. Teachers, clergymen, and in truth almost everybody, lined the broad level field that had been marked off as the diamond. The scene will never be forgotten by spectators and by us who took part.

Hugh Carroll, who was only a fair player, sprained his ankle while practising, and, much to his regret, could not play. He was accepted as the umpire. Although he naturally felt friendly toward our side, his aim was to be fair to each club, and he honestly strove to be impartial with all.

The game started off well, and when five innings were finished, without a run being scored, it was agreed by all that it was the finest contest up to that point ever seen on the Midvale grounds. Hugh Carroll was prompt and correct in his decisions, and, despite the tension of every one's nerves, no clash came until the latter part of the contest. We thought Hugh, in his anxiety to be fair, bore down too heavily on us, but as the others were equally sure he was unduly severe with them, it is quite evident he was doing just right.

One thing nettled us from the first: the Oakdale pitcher was a stranger, whom none of us had ever seen before. When the captain of his nine was questioned, he replied that the youth was a

new student that had joined the academy a short time before. Of course, if that were the fact, we could make no objection to him. It became clear even in the first inning that he was a professional, who had been imported for the purpose of winning the game for the Oakdales. It was true he had entered his name as a student at the academy several days before, so as to prevent his being barred out, but since he left town immediately after the game, the trick was apparent to all.

But, if he *were* a professional, he was not the superior of our own Jim, who never filled his position more admirably than on that memorable day. It was before the time of "curved pitching," as it is called, but Jim was the most accurate pitcher and thrower I ever saw. He did not make a single wild delivery while in the box. He would send in the ball with terrifying swiftness, directly over the plate, and, while making seemingly as much effort with the next, give it a speed only half as great, the "drop" being of the most puzzling nature. In the first and second innings he pitched out the first three players in succession,—a feat that brought applause from our opponents, and scared the professional, who declared he had never in all his life seen such fine work.

But Burkens, the other pitcher, understood his business, and performed the same exploit, among

his victims being Jim Winters and myself. I was never so confident of making a home run as when I watched the ball leave his hand, but, sad to say, I swung my bat three times through vacancy, and sat down among the other failures, unable to close my ears against the unnecessary remarks of the wrought-up spectators.

The first ripple came in the seventh inning, when the score stood two to one against us. Jim was at the bat with two out, and none on bases. He had been batting well, but those who followed were too weak to bring him in. Burkens did his best to strike Jim out, but, to the delight of our friends, he caught the ball fairly on the end of his bat and drove it far down left field beyond the fielder, who began dancing backward, in the hope of getting under it before it struck the ground.

Hardly had the sharp, pistol-like crack of Jim's bat sounded, when he started around the bases like a deer. He was a splendid runner, and he never showed more astonishing speed. When his foot struck first base and he kept on, his body leaned far inward, and his swiftness was unabated as he curved out into the field, and came like a race-horse for second. All the men, women, and children were on their feet, screeching, dancing, and shouting like lunatics. Each member of our nine was leaping up and down, and splitting his throat with appeals to Jim to run! run! as if the

fellow were not already straining every nerve and muscle. We had a coacher to give orders to the players, but he was the most crazy one on the field. Having run across the diamond, he was swinging his arms, beating the air, stamping on his own cap, and making some frantic appeal which it is doubtful whether he himself heard in the general pandemonium.

Meanwhile, the left fielder, whose hat was off, was running with might and main after the ball, which, having struck the earth behind him, was ricochetting toward the limits of the grounds. While we were all yelling to Jim, the Oakdales were shouting with equal frenzy to their left fielder, the appeal being equally superfluous in each case, since both players were doing all that mortal boy could do, but such is baseball.

We expected Jim to stop at second, but were thrilled by the sight of his speeding past without the slightest decrease in his amazing running. He was making for third, and nothing short of death could stop him, but we all saw that it was to be nip and tuck between him and the ball.

By this time the left fielder had snatched up the sphere, and, whirling about and steadyng himself for an instant, he hurled it with desperate strength for the shouting player on third. The throw was wonderful in its perfection, being as accurate as the bullet fired from a Winchester rifle. With

a sinking heart I saw it curve over in air, and knew that that astonishing parabola would end exactly in the hands of his ally on third, without his taking a foot off his base ; it was simply a question as to whether, though its velocity was three times that of the fleet runner tearing over the ground, it would reach the destination of both in advance of him.

Jim did not glance behind him, for it could do him no good. With set teeth, glaring eyes, and flying hair, he was coming down that stretch between second and third base like a wild Indian, while the player, patting his hands expectantly as he watched the fielder, furiously besought him to "let her come!" And then when he saw that little dark sphere sailing like a bird through the air directly toward him, the baseman braced himself to receive it, for a muff would be fatal, and as yet he had not made one in the entire game.

Jim knew from his opponent's actions that the chances were in favour of the ball reaching the base an instant in advance of him. Amid the wild screeching he caught the voices of the coacher and several of us :

"Slide, Jim! slide!"

CHAPTER XVI.

HONESTLY WON

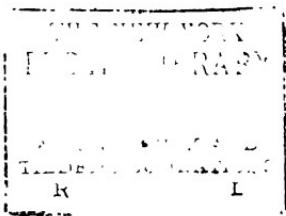
No need of the appeal. While still several yards from the base, Jim plunged forward on his face, and ploughed over the dry ground in a cloud of dust that almost hid him from sight. Knowing what was coming, and eager to do what was right, Hugh Carroll limped hurriedly from the home plate, but, owing to his lameness, was only half-way across the diamond when the climax came.

The instant the baseman received the ball he stooped like a flash and struck the shoulder of the prostrate Jim with it. Then he held it aloft, and shouted his appeal to the umpire. In the deafening tumult none could catch his words, but we knew their meaning. All the other players ran toward the spot, and we mixed with them, and it would have been hard to tell who shouted the loudest, those who knew nothing of the facts naturally making the most noise and expressing the most positive opinions.

Hugh Carroll was puzzled, seeing which the din increased. Jim was lying flat on his face, with



"THEN HE HELD IT ALOFT, AND SHOUTED HIS APPEAL
TO THE UMPIRE."



his left hand outstretched, and the tips of his fingers touching the bag, while he gazed over his shoulder at the swarm of disputants, and awaited the umpire's decision. "Time" being called, the baseman trotted from the bag to the players crowding around the umpire. Jim rose slowly to his feet, still panting from his terrific exertions, and brushed the dust from his clothing. But instead of joining the throng he stood silently looking at the excited players.

The umpire, as the expression goes, was "rattled," and in a state of distressful perplexity. He believed Jim had reached the base in time, though the obscuring dust made it impossible for him to see whether such was the fact.

"I think the runner is safe," was his decision, as soon as he could make himself heard.

Then the hurly-burly burst out greater than ever. Numbers of spectators, including partisans of both nines, ran forward, and joined the disputants. Among them were several middle-aged gentlemen, and one past three-score and ten, who insisted that they were standing close enough to see that Jim's outstretched hand lacked several inches of touching the bag, while about the same number were equally positive that the reverse was the fact.

The captain of the Oakdales declared he would withdraw his nine from the field if the decision

was allowed to stand. All his players shouted "robbery," "a clean cheat," "rotten," and one of them sneeringly asked Hugh how much he had wagered on the game. Hugh's face flushed, and clenching his fist he took a step toward his insulter, but thought better of it and did nothing.

The rest of us appealed to Hugh to stand firm, and we would back him up. The trouble, however, was that he was really in doubt, and since even then the rules required that the runner should be given the benefit of such uncertainty, he was correct.

Suddenly he raised his hand in an appeal for silence. All knew that something important was coming, and a hush fell upon the turbulent throng, ready to break out again the instant an excuse was given.

"I've done my best," he called; "I may be right and I may be wrong, but if you'll listen one minute I'll fix it so it's sure to be right. I can't take the word of an outsider, as you all know; I have the right to stick to my decision, but if we can't win this game fairly, I don't want to see it won by our club. Now, there are only two persons who really know whether Jim Winters was put out or not: they are Jim himself, and Jones, the third baseman. Jones insists that Jim was put out, but I don't know whether he is telling the truth or not, though he may think he is. But

I do know that nothing will tempt Jim Winters to lie, so I'll leave it to him."

This put a new face on matters. The Oakdale players began protesting. Some of them didn't know Jim. We did. Three of our men ran to him and begged him to say nothing.

"The umpire has made his decision; let it stand; you've got nothing to do with it."

Hugh beckoned to him to approach. Again the hubbub ceased, and all eyes were turned upon Jim, who had not yet opened his lips.

"Did he touch you before you got your fingers on the base?" asked Hugh Carroll.

"Yes, sir, he put me out fairly," was the prompt reply of Jim.

No wonder, perhaps, that in the tense state of every one's nerves several of our players looked resentfully at Jim, while our opponents were free with their compliments. Jim was called an "honest fellow," a "square player," "another George Washington," with many other titles that would have flattered any one else.

But he paid no attention to them, and, taking his place in the box, began tossing and toying with the ball, that had been rolled thither, while the nines were exchanging positions. He was sorry that any of the club should feel angry, but it could make no difference with him. To keep his lips closed until appealed to was the utmost

his conscience would permit him to do, and he was not easy over going even that far.

Seven innings were played, and the Oakdale nine was one run in the lead. We had but two more chances at the bat, unless we could tie the score.

Jim pitched royally, putting out the first two batters. The third made a scratch hit and reached first, but the fourth could raise only a twisting foul, which fell into the hands of the nimble Jim. Then we went in, and by one of those strange coincidences which sometimes occur in baseball, and are one of its fascinations, we were put out in precisely the same manner. Then came the ninth inning, with two runs to make in order to win, and with one necessary to tie the score. We had some hope, for there was a chance of Jim going to the bat, and he had showed that he had "got the range" of the opposing pitcher. So, to a certain extent, had most of us.

The first batter was put out, but the next two, by luck, a little skill, and desperate running made their bases. Thus one player stood on first, another on second, and one was out. Matters certainly looked promising for the coveted run, if not more.

I may as well confess that when the game was at this stage, it devolved upon me to show what I could do in the way of batting at a critical point

of the struggle. I stepped boldly forward, spit on my hands, ran them up and down the bat, then grabbed up some dust and rubbed it along the handle of the willow. I had flung aside my hat, and gave the spectators to understand, in every way possible, that I "meant business."

I knew every eye was on me. Father, mother, my little brother, my two sisters, and indeed all were watching me with closer attention than I have ever commanded before or since.

Every player on our nine, including the two on bases, shouted counsel to me. Some advised me to wait till I got the ball where I wanted it; others loudly suggested that I hit the first one that suited; still others begged me to knock the life out of it, and to keep my eye on the leather, while Jim called, "Keep cool, and don't get rattled."

I let the first ball pass, and thereby made a mistake, for it could not have been fairer. The umpire was obliged to call a strike, and smiled when I looked reproachfully at him. Although the second ball was a poor one, I let drive, missing it by at least six inches.

An involuntary groan went up from my friends, and, to reassure them, I rubbed some more dust along the handle of my bat, assumed a confident pose, and tried to look as if the two misses were of no importance any way. The next ball was as

fair as the first, and I struck viciously at it. I made a foul, which entitled me to another attempt. It came the next second, catching me slightly unprepared. In my frantic effort I overbalanced myself, swung half-way around, swished vacancy, and turned almost a somersault before I could check myself.

All my confidence was gone, as with crimson face I picked myself up, and amid the derisive laughter of the crowd slunk off to the bench. It was insisted by every one that I cut the most ridiculous figure that afternoon, and gave the people more genuine mirth than all the other episodes together. I can't deny the charge, and it makes me blush even now to recall it.

Remember that it was our ninth turn at the bat. Two men were out and two on bases. Had I made a hit I should have brought in one, and probably both. I should have covered myself with glory,—but why dwell on the painful subject?

It was Jim Winters's turn next. He was waiting, bat in hand, and he, too, was shaking with laughter at the exhibition I had made as he walked to the home plate. "Too bad," he said, pityingly, in a low voice, as we met, but I noticed that he kept on laughing.

I remember the thrill of admiration that came over me when, like every one else, I fixed my attention upon Jim. He was fifteen years old,

with a handsome face, and his perfect figure was set off by the graceful pose he took, and by his tasteful uniform. His left foot was slightly advanced, the weight of his body resting mainly on his right leg. The bat sloped backward over his right shoulder. From where I sat I could trace his profile against the blue sky beyond the hills. I see him now,—the jaunty cap shoved back from his forehead, where his black curly hair clustered, his nose almost Grecian, but with just enough elevation of the bridge to give the countenance strength, the mouth as pretty as a girl's, the symmetrical chin, and the dark complexion, without a freckle, mole, or flaw.

Had the situation been different, Burkens would have given Jim his base on balls, for he dreaded his batting skill; but to send him to first would advance the other two, bringing one to third, from which he could reach home on the weakest sort of hit. So Burkens exerted himself to the utmost to pitch out Jim, as he had done at the opening of the game.

The only cool person in that immense throng was Jim Winters. He stood like a statue, as the first ball whizzed past him and was properly called a strike. It looked as if he were going to do as badly as I did; certainly he couldn't do any worse.

With every breath hushed, the second ball started exactly in the path of the first. Jim swung

his bat quickly, and with little apparent effort, but never was ball hit more fairly. It was precisely such a hit as he made in the seventh inning, except that it was stronger. The ball sailed toward left field, where the fielder, after one quick glance at it, whirled about and began running at the top of his speed, often glancing over his shoulder to keep track of it, but it struck the ground in advance of him and went skipping far beyond bounds.

Jim came in on the heels of the runner from first. This placed us two points ahead, and no more runs were made. When the Oakdales went to the bat for the last and ninth time, Jim repeated his exploit of pitching out the first three batters in succession, and so we won the championship.

CHAPTER XVII.

NOW FOR COLLEGE

AT the age of sixteen years, Jim Winters was ready for college. Mr. Hanaford took pride in the boys that he prepared for the leading colleges, a number of whom made brilliant students, and were graduated with honours, but he openly said that of them all there was none the equal of Jim. He was thoroughly grounded in his studies, and when he matriculated was admitted to the sophomore class, his examination being the equal of the best of the numerous candidates who presented themselves.

It has been said that the father of Jim was in fair circumstances. He was the owner of a small farm near the Corners, which was a model in every respect. He lived comfortably with his family, but it pinched him somewhat to bear the expense of Jim's three years at one of the principal colleges. The son would have willingly saved his parents their enforced economy, but they had set their hearts upon giving their boy every advantage that could be given in this world, and the lad knew

it would grieve them if he made objection, and so none was made.

Two days before Jim was to leave for college, Hugh Carroll and I walked out to his house to call. Every one who knew the fellow felt a pride in him, and there was not a man, woman, or child in the community who did not follow him with his best wishes. Any misfortune that could befall him would have been accepted as a personal misfortune by all of us.

Hugh and I were talking over school days, recalling the fine qualities of our young friend, who was now taller than his father, and a picture of manly strength and beauty. It was a balmy summer afternoon when we reached the house, and Jim, who was sitting on the front porch, came down to the gate to shake hands with us, the same smiling, good-natured, hospitable fellow that he always had been. It was so pleasant out-of-doors that we sat down on the porch to talk of old times and build air-castles for the future.

"I have had an odd experience," said Jim, after we had talked awhile.

We looked inquiringly at him, and he explained : "A well-dressed, gentlemanly young man called this forenoon. He came to Oakdale on the train, and walked out to my home. He introduced himself as from Nipantic College, which, you know, claims to be the leader in athletic sports, as well

as being at the front in its educational facilities. I was glad to see him, and he stayed to dinner. I noticed that most of his talk, especially before father and mother, was devoted to praises of his alma mater, as he called it. We agreed with him, for no one can deny that Nipantic is one of the very best institutions in the country, but I couldn't help wondering what errand had brought him out here.

"He gave no hint until we sat out here on the porch, and he lit a cigarette. Then it all came out. He had learned in some way that I was about to enter Belmore, and his business was to persuade me to change my mind, and go to Nipantic. What inducement do you suppose he offered? He said my tuition for the whole three years should not cost me a cent; furthermore, I should receive a handsome bonus, to be made up by certain wealthy students, whose names he didn't give, and which I didn't care to know."

"But why in the name of common sense did he make you such an offer?" asked Hugh.

"It was on condition that I should join their baseball nine as pitcher and captain. You know the Nipantics lost the college championship last year, and they have set their hearts on winning it back again. They seem to think I can give them some help in doing it, and that was their offer. What do you think of it?"

"Why don't you take it?" asked Hugh, impulsively; "it means a good sum of money, and there is no disgrace in the business."

"And what is your opinion?" asked the smiling Jim, turning toward me.

"It is a matter for you to decide. As Hugh says, there seems to be nothing wrong about the matter, and yet it is, after all, slightly off colour. You are an amateur player, and have said that nothing could lead you into the professional ranks. While you might claim still to be an amateur, there can be no question that you would receive pay for your playing, and, therefore, to all intents and purposes, you would be a professional."

Had Hugh Carroll paused to reflect a moment, he would not have attempted to encourage Jim into accepting the offer, for he knew our friend as well as I.

"That's it," said Jim, as indifferently as if the matter had no special interest for him; "the moment's temptation was the burden that it would lift from the shoulders of father and mother, for I know it means self-denial on their part to send me to college, but, while no crime was involved, it is not the right thing. I could not accept it and retain my self-respect. Had I hesitated, all doubt was removed when he asked me not to mention his name (which, of course, I shall not), and to be careful not to reveal the arrangement to any

one, since their rivals in the other colleges would make an outcry over it.

"I saw that my caller had not the slightest suspicion that he was doing anything wrong, and I did not preach him a sermon. I said my mind was fully made up to go to Belmore, and it was too late now to change it; I thanked him for his good opinion of my playing, but was frank to say that it did not commend itself to my sense of honour. I said this so firmly, though kindly, that he ceased his arguments, only asking me, as he was about to leave, to think it over, and if I changed my mind, as he hoped I should, to drop him a line, and the arrangement would stand.

"Well, that ends *that* business," remarked Jim, with a laugh, "though when he intimated that the proposal he made was not an uncommon one, by any means, I was a little taken back."

"I suppose you will join the nine at Belmore?" asked Hugh.

"They haven't asked me yet; if they think I can be of any help, why, I suppose I shall be mustered in; but there's one thing certain," added Jim, compressing his lips, "no baseball, football, or any other sport shall interfere with my studies. I am going to Belmore to cultivate my mind, not my body, and when I find the demands of one affects the other, it's the sport that will go. I believe in exercise, and like those friendly contests of skill,

where there's no suspicion of unfairness. But there is too much of an athletic craze in the colleges, and I believe much harm is done; I don't intend to help in that line."

Our conversation on this interesting question drifted before we knew it into wrestling. Hugh Carroll challenged Jim to a wrestling bout on the lawn in front of the house. Jim accepted like a flash, and the next minute their coats were off, and they were at it. The result was what might have been expected. Within a few seconds Hugh was on the broad of his back, with his conqueror laughing over him.

"My foot slipped that time," said Hugh, as he climbed to his feet; "you can't do it again."

But Jim did do it as readily as before.

"I own up," said Hugh, once more rising to his feet, and putting on his hat; "you're too much for me. *You* try him," he said, turning to me; "you seem to have so much fun over my failure that I suppose you think you can do better."

"Hugh gave me a rough tussle," said Jim, "and maybe you can do better; I'm waiting."

I remarked that I wasn't feeling very well, and would prefer to postpone the bout to some time when I should feel better,—say in about a week (I knew Jim would be at college within less than that time). Hugh made some unnecessary remark about my being afraid, and Jim's grin intimated

that he shared his suspicion. Perhaps they were not far from the truth. Suppose we drop the subject.

It was at this juncture that Mr. Winters came around the end of the house. In fact, he had been standing there long enough to witness the overthrow of Hugh. He was just as sunshiny a man as Jim was a boy.

"The conceit of these young sprouts needs taking down," he remarked; "if Jim is allowed to go on this way, he'll begin to think he knows something about wrestling, and will have the impudence to believe he has a chance against me."

"So I have!" called out Jim; "I challenge you, pop, to a match right here."

"Do you mean it?"

"Off with your coat, and I'll show you!"

"I don't need to take off my coat to the like of you; you are in sore need of a lesson, and here goes."

It was rare enjoyment to Hugh and me to see father and son lock arms, both in the best of temper, and each resolutely set on overthrowing the other. The parent was a little distrustful, for he had noted the growing strength of his boy, in their rompings together. Jim knew he would receive no mercy, and he resolved to show none. It would be a glorious victory if he could down the

father who had spoken so slightingly of his skill. He set his teeth and muscles, and made up his mind to do it.

But it must be borne in mind that much of the power and suppleness of Jim Winters was inherited from that man in middle life, whose muscles were like iron, and who was hardly past the prime of his splendid strength. When the two stood side by side, with their arms about each other's bodies, and began the struggle, it was quickly terminated. With scarcely any apparent effort, the father laid his son on his back, and then remarked, as he stepped away for him to rise :

“ Jim, I'll tie one hand behind me next time — ”

At that moment we heard a burst of gleeful laughter from the direction of the house. Mrs. Winters was standing at one of the lower windows, her arms folded, while she smiled with pleasure at the exhibition she had just witnessed. At the raised window over her head stood Jennie, clapping her hands, and jumping up and down with delight.

“ Good ! good ! ” she called. “ I'm so glad Jim was thrown ! served him right.”

“ I'll teach you to laugh at a fellow when he is down,” called back her brother, with an assumption of indignation that deceived no one, and, without stopping to pick up his hat, he plunged through the front door after his sister.

Jennie saw him coming, and, with a scream, vanished from the window. Her brother was hardly inside the house, when she burst out of the front door, having skittered down the back stairs, and started across the lawn like a deer. Girl-like, she kept screaming at every step, thus revealing herself to Jim, who shot out of the door only a short distance behind her, while the rest of us watched the fun.

Jennie, in her way, was as supple as her big brother, but she was no match in a foot-race for him. He gained so rapidly, breathing out threatenings and slaughter with every step, that nothing but an accident could prevent her being overtaken, and that accident took place.

Jim was near enough to reach out his hand to seize her, while she, continually glancing over her shoulder, and using half her strength in outcries, was circling around so as to head toward her father, evidently intending to appeal to him to save her, when her pursuer's foot caught in something, and down he went, rolling over and over, while everybody roared with laughter. As to whether that fall was an accident or intentional, let us not inquire too closely.

The next moment Jennie dashed behind her father, threw her arms around his waist, and peeping out from under his elbow, pleaded :

“Pop, don't let him get me!”

"Stay where you are, little one; I'll save you from him."

Jim, apparently much crestfallen, came slowly toward us.

"You have escaped me, miss, this time, but beware! I'll settle with you! As for *you*, Mr. Winters," he added, stepping in front of his parent, and impressively shaking his finger, "wait till I come back from college. You can outwrestle me now, but there'll be a different story to tell after I have grown more and have had some training."

"Don't boast, young man, or I'll come down to college and show the young fellows there how easy it is for me to handle you."

This incident may be taken as a fair type of the daily life of the family. There was not a home in the whole country round that contained more sunshine. Parents, son, and daughter were simply four children who romped with one another, while the old house rang with merriment. Perhaps the mother was the most quiet, but none enjoyed the sport more than she. Away back in his childhood, before any one could remember, Jim had fallen in love with her. She was the repository of all his secrets, and the counsellor in everything. It was at her knee that he first bowed his head in infantile prayer, and when he grew into a tall, strong lad, she often sat on his

lap, while he petted her, as he did his sister. Never did the members of the family part at night or meet in the morning without mutual kisses. As Jim grew older, and subjects forced themselves upon him which delicacy forbade his discussing fully with his mother, he found the true and invaluable friend in his father. It was like an elder brother giving advice to and helping a younger brother. There was no question that Jim hesitated to lay before his father, whose good sense, worldly wisdom, and experience enabled him to save his boy from many a pitfall into which parents, through a mistaken false modesty, have seen their children go to destruction. As the lad grew in strength, he and his father became chums and comrades, while the same was true regarding Jennie and her mother. Truths, that the welfare of soul and body needed they should know, were made plain to them by the ones whom God intends shall perform that solemn and sacred duty.

CHAPTER XVIII.

COLLEGE DAYS

Not a tear was shed when Jim Winters bade his folks good-bye and started for college. Why should there be? The institution was less than a hundred miles distant; it was one of the foremost in the country, and among the hundreds of students were many noted for their manliness and sterling worth. The faculty included some of the foremost scholars in the land. Like all colleges, it had its proportion of wild, reckless young men, ruined as often by the mistaken indulgence of their parents as by their own perverse natures.

Jim was now to go out from his own home and cast his lot among this motley assemblage, but neither he nor his parents felt any misgiving. He had begun right, and his principles were so firmly established that nothing could shake them.

"Jim," said his mother, as he took her for the last time in his arms and, lifting the frail little woman off her feet, kissed the sweetest lips in all the world, "I have no advice to give you, for you need none: *be yourself.*"

"Can I be anything else with your dear memory

ever with me?" he asked, with almost a tear in his eye; "I shall never do or say anything that can grieve you."

"I know that — I know that — God bless you!"

"Well, I think I ought to give you some advice," said Jennie.

Jim took off his hat and held down his head.

"Meekly I wait for it."

"You mustn't learn to tell stories, steal apples and fruit, use tobacco, lie abed late in the morning, drink whiskey —"

The smiling mother's hand was over her daughter's mouth.

"You have forgotten several things," said the boy, gravely.

"What are they?"

"You haven't warned me against burglary, incendiarism, forgery, murder, and so on."

"Mother stopped me before I reached them, but I see you are thinking of them."

Jim turned and pinched the whiskered cheek of his father.

"Don't forget, pop, we are to have that wrestling bout over again after my graduation."

"Don't worry, young man; I'll be sure to remember it."

One more embrace all around, and Jim jumped into the carriage which the hired man had driven up to the front of the gate, and was off.

It would be superfluous to dwell upon Jim Winters's life at Belmore College, for the reader can picture it almost as well as I, who have only the advantage of having had companionship with him during that period in his life. We entered the same class, were roommates, and left college together. My own personality is of no interest to the reader, and I have endeavoured to keep it in the background except when my story has compelled otherwise.

Jim's sunshiny nature, his readiness to help a less gifted student, his moral courage, his freedom from conceit or assumption, his charity for the failings of those around him, and his brilliant scholarship made him popular from the first with the faculty as well as the students, and he "wore well."

One peculiar fact gave me rare enjoyment. Although, as I have already stated, Jim's home was less than a hundred miles distant, and his skill as a ball player had attracted the attention of those interested in the game at Nipantic College, fully three times as far away, yet there was not a person at Belmore besides myself who had ever heard a word of it. I saw a chance for some amusement.

Jim did not seem to notice or care for the fact that he was not asked to join the two-score young men that were invited to try for a place on the nine.

"I guess I'll keep out of it," he remarked to me; "it's easy enough for me to get all the exercise in the gymnasium, and I may make a fizzle if I try to do any pitching."

I kept mum, but, before that day was over, I suggested to the president of the club that it would be well to invite my roommate to show what he could do.

"What position is he accustomed to play?"

"He is one of the best amateur pitchers in the country."

"I think I have heard that remark before, but, somehow or other, the young gentlemen who come to us with that introduction don't pan out well."

"You can do as you please," I replied, a little annoyed by the remark, "but you'll make a mistake if you pass over him."

"A pitcher is our great need, but he must be something exceptional to meet our wants; we mean to keep the championship at Belmore if it's possible. Suppose you invite your friend out tomorrow afternoon to practise with the rest, and we'll size him up."

When I bore the invitation to Jim, it required a good deal of persuasion to get him to accept it. He was determined that nothing should prevent him from securing every possible educational advantage at the college, and he had his fears that baseball would make too heavy a draught on his

time. But he really yearned to go out on the diamond, and I was delighted and expectant on the afternoon when several hundred of us gathered on the field to watch him and the other candidates show what they could do.

It may be said of Jim that he was always in training. He never used tobacco and he practised regularly in the gymnasium throughout the winter. The young men who were looked upon as the most likely to form a part of the nine practised under cover in throwing and batting the ball, while the two down for pitchers neglected their studies for the sake of practice in the "cage."

Two nines were made up from the candidates, and proceedings began. It was arranged that one of the regulars should fill the pitcher's box for the first three innings, the other for the same number, while Jim was to be allowed to try his hand after that. Meanwhile, he was placed in right field, where it is popularly believed the man has less to do than in any other position.

Jim did not have much work, but two high flies that soared in that direction were gathered in by him with such ease and grace as to elicit applause. Then he made a long run after one sailing over the centre fielder's head, and caught it with a single outstretched hand, when no one deemed the feat possible. Not only that, but since one of the base-runners had left his position, confident that no

would be made, Jim steadied him. hit had
the ball with such swift and unerrin
ond that the player was put out be" I
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the house."

bottom of the batting list of the
what might be called the scrub
they were pitted against the
, who had loaned their two
andidates. Since the batsmen
of with ease as they came to the
. s turn did not arrive until the third
, after his two predecessors were put out.
had already made such a good record in the
field that he was watched with curiosity. I was
so nervous that I could not sit still. I hoped for
great things, but feared a failure.

The pitcher sent in an easy ball and Jim let
drive at the first one. It went like a rifle-shot over
the third baseman's head, and still rising, passed
beyond reach of the left fielder, who made a frantic
grab at it, only to whirl about and see it skipping
far down the field behind him. Jim made the
circuit of the bases without half trying.

Some one tapped me on the shoulder. It was
the president of the club, who, leaning over until
his eye-glasses were close to my face, shouted, as
he had to do in order to be heard above the
din :

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time. ~~But~~ friend of yours can keep up the gait, mon~~d~~ find."

afte~~r~~ He'll keep it up," I replied, "wait till you see him pitch!"

The second time at the bat Jim made a two-base hit, but there was no one who could bring him in, though he made a daring steal to third.

Jim explained to me afterward that the practice in the field was just sufficient to limber him up and put him in the best form possible. He never felt more confident than when it came his turn to try his hand as pitcher in the last three innings, and he really surpassed himself. With little apparent effort he pitched out the first three men and did the same thing in the next inning. In the last, the three heaviest batters were pitted against him. The first swept his bat through vacancy, and, with an angry exclamation, slouched off to the bench. The second raised a difficult foul, which Jim yelled to the catcher to let alone, while he sprinted back of the line and took with one hand, though it caused him to tumble headlong to the ground. The batter tried again and again, and then followed the procession to the bench.

The catcher was still playing far back, when the third batter succeeded in bunting the ball and started like a deer for first base. Three bounds and Jim had the sphere, and when the runner arrived panting at the bag, the baseman stood smil-

ing with the ball in his hand. Thus not a hit had been made off Jim in the three innings.

"What do you think of my friend *now?*" I asked, touching the arm of the president.

"He'll do," was the comment, "but where is he from? Where has he played?"

"He won the championship for his club at Midvale when he was a half-grown boy; the Nipantics sent a man to try to persuade him to enter that college and offered him the captaincy of their nine (I of course could give no more particulars), and he has been promised an offer from one of the league clubs, which, however, nothing will induce him to accept. I consider him a pretty fair player."

"Fair player!" repeated the president, as several of the directors gathered round him, to listen to our words, all of them a-quiver with excitement; "why, he is what you called him,—the best college player in the country."

"I never saw finer catching and throwing," said one of the enthusiastic directors, "and his batting is out of sight; as for his pitching, he's a phenom."

"The genuine wonder of the nineteenth century," added another.

"Here, Winters, come here!" shouted the president, as he saw Jim walking off the grounds. My chum came up smiling and blushing to the roots

of his hair. He knew what awaited him. His hand was shaken over and over again, he was thumped on the back, invited to smoke, to meet the boys at a little blow-out that evening on the dead quiet, and was informed more times than can be guessed that the championship was secure another year for Belmore, provided he pitched. "It's all over but the shouting," was the oft repeated remark, which has been made many times before and since.

When the flurry subsided and Jim had washed up, donned his civilian clothes, and sat with me alone in the room, he said :

"I had a remarkable experience to-day when pitching ; I am at a loss to understand it, it's a mystery."

"Tell me what it was."

"In the second inning that I pitched, something prompted me to take hold of the ball by holding it between the first two fingers and the thumb and snapping my wrist toward the left like this," and he showed me.

"I see nothing extraordinary in that."

"No, not in that, but in the result ; when that ball left my hand it did not follow a straight line, but made a distinct curve to one side, coming back after passing the batter, so that the catcher did not move from his position. After a bit I tried it again, and the ball curved precisely as before."

"It seems impossible," I said, "for it is against the laws of mechanics; after a regular body like a sphere leaves your hand it must follow a straight line, that is, so far as any side movement is concerned. Nothing but gravity can act upon it to form the parabola."

I may pause here to remind the reader in these days of curve pitching that my views were at first shared by nearly every one. I wrote to the leading scientific journal of the country, which replied that curve pitching, as it is now understood, was an impossibility. The incident of Professor Swift, of Rochester, is well remembered. He insisted that a ball could not be made to turn aside after leaving the pitcher's hands. It was not until by invitation he went out on the ball field and saw it repeatedly done that he would admit it. "Seeing is believing," was his comment as he yielded the point.

"Pierce, the catcher, was the only one who noticed it," added Jim, in talking over the matter; "he spoke to me about it, and we are going off by ourselves to-morrow to investigate further; I shall be glad to have you with us to look on."

Well, the result of this practice was to demonstrate that, by an accident, Jim Winters had learned how to pitch a curved ball. He did it over and over again. Then the president and directors were invited to be present. They would

not believe the thing was among the possibilities, until they stood directly behind Jim and saw the ball take its sinuous course. I doubt whether the discovery of a gold mine would have delighted them more.

"We must keep this a secret," said the president; "but won't the Nipantics and Ashlars open their eyes when we gather them in again?"

The secret, however, got out, and in due time reached the two leading colleges, but instead of creating the dismay we counted on, it caused calm contempt.

"Wait until that young countryman gets in front of our sluggers," was the comment; "we'll knock him and his curved pitching out of the box in one inning."

In Jim's experiments it did not occur to him that the ball could be made to swerve in more than one direction, whereas, as is well known, it may be induced to turn to the right or left, or to rise or drop. By practice he was able to make it move at least a foot, if not more, to the right in passing from his hand to the home plate.

The campaign was managed with shrewdness that early summer. The president advised Jim not to be too free in using his curves, since the skilful batsmen would soon learn how to meet them, but to save it for emergencies. It happened that the Ashlars were weak that season,

and, having lost the first two games, they dropped out of the race. The Nipantics had a splendid club and gave us a hard tussle. Jim pitched a straight ball in the first game, and only one hit was made from him. The second and third games were won by the Nipantics, who thus gained the championship, and thereby hangs a little tale that I must tell.

CHAPTER XIX.

A BUSINESS PROPOSITION

THREE days before the date of the second game, Jim Winters was walking alone on the outskirts of the college town, when he saw a span of horses coming toward him on a frantic run. The coachman in his panic had leaped from his seat, and the lines were dangling over the ground. Seated in the carriage was an elderly lady, helpless and in imminent danger of death.

I am proud to believe that three-fourths of the students in Belmore College would have done precisely what Jim did, had the opportunity been theirs. He ran out in the middle of the highway, and, finding the animals could not be checked, seized the bits and hung on with might and main. He was carried a considerable way, but succeeded in stopping the panic-stricken animals and in saving the life of the fainting old lady.

This was a creditable exploit, but the same thing had been done many a time before and has been done since. The lady was so grateful to her young preserver that she sent him a hand-

some gold watch and called at his rooms to present it. Jim was embarrassed, as he always was under circumstances of that nature, but kept his promise to call upon the good woman, whose next step was to write to his father and mother, and inform them of what he had done, incidentally adding that he was the finest young man that ever lived.

"That's putting it rather strong," remarked Mr. Winters after reading the letter aloud, "but I don't feel disposed to contradict the good woman, Mollie."

"I'm sure I don't," added the grateful mother; "but it's only what we might have expected of our Jim."

"I'd like to hear any one say Jim isn't what she says he is," up spoke Jennie, with a warning shake of her head.

But I am digressing. One result of this little incident was that Jim's right arm was so wrenched by his struggle with the runaway team that it was impossible for him to pitch in either of the last two games with the Nipantics, who won the championship by a handsome margin.

"And we should have done it with equal ease if that wonderful pitcher of yours had been in the box," was their observation at the close of the contest.

"Wait till next season," replied our president,

who did not mind a little chaffing; "we are going to arrange that no runaways shall take place within a mile, or if they do we shall lock Winters in his room until they are over. I'm not saying anything, but I have my suspicions as to who arranged that scheme for knocking out our pitcher."

Inasmuch as Jim was unable to take any part in the second game, he was agreed upon as the umpire for that contest. It was a compliment indeed, that the Nipantics accepted him without objection. In some way, since he had become famous as a player, his reputation of being thoroughly honest had also spread. It was a still greater compliment to Jim that not one of his decisions was disputed by either club, and at the conclusion of the second game the captain of the Nipantics made a special request that, if Jim were unable to take part in the deciding meet, he should act as umpire in that also.

"I value that compliment more than if I had been able to win the game," remarked Jim to me, "though I *did* long to help out our boys to-day."

It was on the night preceding the last struggle that our players and their friends went to New York and took quarters at one of the leading hotels. The contest was to be on neutral grounds, and it was generally known that Jim Winters had

been agreed upon as the umpire. The satisfaction was general. It is a creditable fact regarding baseball, football, and indeed all the college sports, that there never has been the shadow of a suspicion against the integrity of any player. It is a rare pleasure to look upon such struggles, when we see not only the most superb skill, but know that every participant is honestly doing his best to bring the victory to his side.

Quite late in the evening, when Jim was about to retire to his room, he was approached by a well-dressed man, who asked the privilege of seeing him alone.

Something in the man's voice and appearance struck Jim as familiar, and a second glance enabled him to recognise him as the gentleman who, a couple of years before, had advised him of the fortune awaiting him in the ranks of professional ball players.

"Ah, Mr. St. Clair, I am glad to meet you again."

"And I am delighted to shake your hand once more; can you come up to my room for a few minutes?"

"Certainly," and Jim took the elevator with him to the third floor, wondering what matter was now on the mind of the individual. Passing along the hall, the couple entered a large bedroom, where two gentlemen evidently expected them,

for they rose in greeting, and when Jim was introduced, effusively shook his hand. Upon the table in the middle of the apartment were glasses and two bottles of champagne, one of which was not yet opened, while a half-dozen choice Perfectos bulged from a tumbler beside the wine, the room being blue with smoke, with the odour of the liquor filling the atmosphere.

"You will join us," remarked one of the men, a large, corpulent person, with dyed hair and moustache, and with a diamond on his broad expanse of shirt front. Several rings sparkled on his fingers, and his watch-chain and seals must have weighed a fourth of a pound.

"I thank you, gentlemen, I never smoke or drink," replied Jim, taking the offered chair; "you will excuse me."

"Certainly; they are bad habits, and I believe I shall swear off," said the man, seriously, though the other two companions, knowing the insincerity of the remark, smiled. "You will permit us?"

"Of course," replied Jim, "don't let me interfere with your enjoyment."

The three drank, lit fresh cigars, and leaned back in their chairs. The fleshy person, who had been introduced as Mr. O'Neil, acted as spokesman for the others. He had heard of the accident by which Mr. Winters was prevented from taking part in the game of the morrow, and he was very



"**I THANK YOU, GENTLEMEN, I NEVER SMOKE OR DRINK."**

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sorry. It would be a great treat to see Mr. Winters in the box, since his skill was so widely known. Was Mr. Winters sure he would not be able to play?

"Yes, it is settled; my arm is so badly strained that I couldn't pitch a ball across the diamond; I am to act as umpire."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. O'Neil, reaching his pudgy hand across and slapping the knee of Jim; "that's the best sort of news, the best sort of news."

Jim was mystified to understand why the tidings should cause such buoyancy of spirits on the part of the three men, for the faces of the other two perceptibly lightened.

"Well, I hope to give satisfaction, though it is a trying position."

"Very true, very true," assented Mr. O'Neil, heartily; "now, Mr. Winters, I have heard of you as a likely young man, and I have a business proposition to make to you. I judge you wouldn't be averse to making a fee of five hundred dollars, a fee of five hundred dollars," he repeated.

Jim saw what was coming and replied:

"I certainly should not, provided it were earned honestly."

"Of course, of course," explained Mr. O'Neil, his mushy eyes expanding with virtue; "we are not the gentlemen to insult you by making any

other proposition ; we scorn to impugn the honour of a gentleman like yourself."

"Well, then, I shall be obliged if you will come to the point."

"That's it, that's it ; I believe in coming to the point ; I'm not the gentleman to beat about the bush when any matter is under consideration. Now what I'm getting at is this."

He rested both elbows on the table, a position which so elevated his immense shoulders that he looked like a turtle with his head just emerging from its shell. He took two or three puffs of his cigar, removed it from between his thick lips, blew away the smoke, and, trying to assume a winning expression, said :

"As my friends and myself figure out, this is going to be a mighty close game to-morrow ; each nine has won a game, and both will be on their mettle, on their mettle."

"There can be no question as to that."

"Certainly not, certainly not ; and a great deal will depend on the 'empire.' " (A good many persons will have it "empire" instead of "umpire.")

As Mr. O'Neil made this sapient remark, he indulged in so broad a grin that he displayed the gold filling in one-half of his teeth. At the same time he winked one of his pulpy eyes significantly. All doubt was removed from the mind of Jim, who, nevertheless, replied :

"The umpire must be quick, strict, and impartial."

"That's what an empire must be, what an empire must be; I have frequently made the same observation. But to come to the point: there will be many close decisions, where it will be right for the empire to decide either way, and no one will question him, no one will question him. Now, Mr. Winters, you naturally feel partial toward your own nine, toward your own nine. No one can blame you if you lean toward them, lean toward them. If you will lean to the extent of making your side win, dead sure, dead sure, I'll give you five hundred dollars."

Before the indignant Jim could protest, Mr. O'Neil stopped him with a wave of the hand.

"One minute, Mr. Winters, one minute. To show our faith in your honesty, I'll put the five hundred dollars in your hand this very minute before you leave this room. You see how much we trust you, how much we trust you. You can give us dead away if you've a mind to, but we'll take the chances, take the chances."

And he drew a wallet from his inside coat pocket, that in its way was as rotund and fat as he was as a man. He had begun to count out the bills of large denomination, when Jim interposed. Rising to his feet, he said:

"Stop! go no further; your proposition, veiled as you have tried to make it, is simply the offer

of a bribe for me to make my club win. The proposition is an insult; you cannot explain it away with any apology; let me not hear another word; I bid you good evening."

And before any one could interpose, the young man left the room.

Jim Winters grieved to see his club defeated the next afternoon, but one fact tempered his disappointment,—he knew that Mr. O'Neil and his friends were out a good deal more money than they paid for their admission and grand stand tickets.

CHAPTER XX.

GRAND WORK

JIM WINTERS was in superb trim for the base-ball struggle for the championship, and the excitement was at fever-heat. The intercollegiate agreement was that the honour should go to the nine winning two out of three games, and this is the way it terminated: The Nipantics again defeated the Ashlars, we did the same, and then the question lay between the Nipantics and ourselves. In the first game we overcame them by one run, and in the second we made two to their nothing. It was Jim Winters's pitching that did it, and the modest fellow could not deny it, even if disposed to do so. He worked that wonderful curve to perfection. The sneers of our opponents turned to silent amazement, for, as Professor Swift remarked, "seeing is believing," and there was no denying that which took place before their eyes.

Toward the close of the game, the captain of the Nipantics called his men about him for some final suggestions.

"When you think the ball is going to strike

you in the stomach, let drive at it, for it will be out on the end of your bat ; but, if you are sure it's going to land on the nose of your bat, don't strike ! The chances are that it will make a circuit of the club-house, and come round by that path to the catcher."

It was an important discovery for the Nipantics to make, but, unhappily for them, it came too late to save them from defeat.

During the third year, the contest was closer. The fact that a baseball could be made to curve while passing through the air was no longer denied. By constant practice several of the professional pitchers learned how to do it, and one of them taught the trick to the pitcher of the Nipantics. The consequence was that, in our first contest with them, two curving pitchers were pitted against each other, and we were beaten after an eleven-inning struggle by a single run.

But our boys learned fast. Moreover, Jim got the idea into his head that if a ball could be made to turn outward in its course, it could be forced to take the opposite direction. Long and patient experimenting brought him success, and he used his skill for all it was worth in the following games. The system of signals that he had arranged with Pierce, the catcher, was incomprehensible to our opponents, who did their utmost to learn them.

A peculiar incident of the final struggle was that, while Jim once more won the victory for us, he did not do it by his pitching, although that was a strong factor. Curve pitching had become general by that time, so that it lost most of the effectiveness it had at first.

It was in the thirteenth inning, and we had been at the bat for the last time, the score standing three to two in our favour. The excitement was beyond the imagination of any one who has not looked upon such a contest. The first of our opponents at the bat was the heaviest hitter on the nine, and Jim purposely gave him his base. The second missed the third strike, and Pierce, who was distressingly nervous, had his first passed ball of the season. Before he could recover it, the batter was on first, and the other on second. The error almost broke Pierce's heart, while a general groan went up from the partisans of the Belmores.

"It's all right, my boy," called Jim; "they haven't reached home plate yet, and they won't in a hurry, either."

To the consternation of us all, the third batsman made a safe hit over short. Thus the three bases were filled, and not a man out. A run would tie the game, and two runs would win, and it looked as if nothing in the world could shut out the Nipantics. Jim saw the strained tension of

his men, and though he must have felt something of it himself, he laughed, and called to them to keep cool, while he toyed and tossed the ball, so as to give them the opportunity to pull themselves together. He saw that the third runner was playing dangerously far off his base, and he was on the alert to catch him. Suddenly the ball shot from Jim's hand like a rifle-shot, and was in the grip of the baseman in an instant. The runner was lying on his face with his finger tips touching the bag. It was a close decision, but the umpire called "Safe!" and the play went for naught.

It would never do now to give the batter a base, for that of necessity would force in the coveted run. Jim pitched with all his remarkable skill. One strike—two strikes—and then the third attempt caught the ball, which shot high in air, but at so abrupt an angle that it began descending toward second base.

"I'll take it! keep out of my way!" called Jim, running toward second, where the baseman made room for him, though the ball was really his.

The ball climbed far aloft, and came shooting downward with great swiftness. It was difficult to catch, but if any one could do it, Jim was the man. Every runner had one foot on his base with the other outstretched, ready to make a dash, if a muff followed. His eyes, like those of the thousands, were fixed on Jim, for it may be said

the question of the championship rested with him.

The ball struck his uplifted hands and then shot out again. On the instant, the three runners were off like deer, and it seemed but a second or two before the one on third went ploughing up the dust around the home plate, while his extended hand rested on the marble block, buried in the ground. He was sure of victory, but when he rose to his feet, and looked around, he made an astounding discovery.

That seeming muff of Jim was a piece of strategy. True, the ball went out of his hands, but he caused it to bound up in air, and before it could fall to the ground he had leaped under and caught it. That made it a fair catch, and put out the batsman. From where he stood, Jim instantly put his foot on second base, which retired the runner who had left that bag; then the ball went like an arrow to Pierce the catcher, who was straddling home plate, and who thumped the runner's shoulder as he came scraping toward him on his face. The triple play retired the side, and once more brought the championship to Belmore.

You can picture the scene that followed. Jim tried to fight off his enthusiastic associates, but they were too many for him, and, despite his struggles, they raised him on their shoulders, and

sang and cheered and shouted like children, and who can blame them?

The Nipantics were manly fellows and joined in the applause almost as heartily as the friends of the Belmores.

"There's one consolation, Winters," said the captain, as he took his hand, "this is your last year at Belmore, and we shall have a show next season, but, old fellow, you're a trump and deserve a gold medal."

Several extravagant offers were made to Jim by leading professional clubs, but none could tempt him. He laughed, shook his curly head, and told them it was a waste of time to discuss the matter with him. He had never received one penny directly or indirectly for playing, and never would. He played because he liked it and for the glory of old Belmore.

But the climax came on the following Thanksgiving Day. Jim was half-back on the football team, and was admittedly the superior of any the college had had for years, although Belmore has always been stronger in football than in baseball. The game was so new to him that he accomplished little the first year in college, but he made his mark in the second year, and raised the hopes of his college friends that the championship would be brought back to Belmore.

Our cause for misgiving the third year was that

we had lost three of our best players, while the Nipantics, our traditional rivals, did not lose one. Their shrewdest men of former years were helping to coach and train the eleven, and since we were their most formidable opponents, they bent every energy toward beating us.

Let us come down to that crisp sunshiny autumn afternoon on the Berkeley Oval, where the deciding struggle took place under the eyes of fully thirty thousand spectators within and without the grounds. The flags and banners, the gay equipages, the hurrahing men, the thousands of pretty girls, proudly displaying the colours of their favourite college, and helping to sing and cheer their heroes, the surging crowds of policemen struggling to keep order, the tense hush when some critical play was under way, the wild tumult over a brilliant feat, the sadness of the partisans of the vanquished, the hurrahs of the friends of the victors, the defiant cries and flutter of flags, and the tooting of horns,—all these have been described and witnessed and are beyond my power fittingly to picture.

It was a royal struggle, and at the end of the first half neither eleven had made a point, though the sound of the whistle prevented the Nipantics from making a certain touch-down. Back and forth surged the two-score and more of athletes, receiving bruises, thumps, and falls that appeared to jar

the ground and would have been fatal to untrained men. Sometimes the whole party piled upon a panting player hugging the ball, until not a glimpse of him could be seen as he was jammed down into the hard earth. If an unoccupied man was left, he took a run on general principles, and, landing on top of the human pyramid, kicked up his feet and helped to flatten out the young man at the base. Two or three players were injured and had to limp off the grounds, though ready to fight to maintain their places. Several promising runs had been nipped in the bud, and the spectators began to talk of a drawn game.

The latter half was nearly over when one of those incidents took place which send the blood tingling through the veins. Back of the Nipantic line one of our men was seen furiously struggling around the right end of our opponents, several of his friends fighting desperately to open a path for him, while he contributed not a little by his own fierce plunges. Partisans and opponents converged toward him, but he kept his feet, and the next instant flanked the end, still struggling and plunging with the strength of a giant. His allies fought hard to help him ; his opponents, however, seemed to clog his feet and he made scant progress, but was still slowly gaining.

Suddenly, like a lion, he shook off his pestering foes and started straight down the field toward the

goal-posts, and then we saw that the fellow making this prodigious effort was Jim Winters.

How he came! No living runner could overtake him, though the swiftest sprinters of the Nipantics were straining every nerve to come up with him, and the foremost held his own.

A quick glance over his shoulder showed Jim that he had nothing to fear from the rear, but there was a rock in his path in the person of the Nipantic full-back, who was cutting diagonally across his course and gathering his muscles for the panther-like spring that was to bring down this tremendous runner. The man was a Hercules, all nerve, knotted muscle, and suppleness, and he was trained to the highest point. Jim saw him, and he, too, braced himself for the terrific encounter.

They came together with a shock that it seemed must break every bone in their bodies. The full-back tackled low and the brief struggle was fearful. Unless Jim could fight him off in a few seconds his enemies would be upon his shoulders, and, winding around his legs, down he would go as if under an avalanche.

How it was done no one could tell, but done it was. For an instant the bodies writhed and twisted, and some of us thought we saw vicious blows struck, but Jim said it was his elbow that did the business. The hold of the young Hercules

relaxed, he was tumbled to the ground, and bounding from his grasp, away went Jim for the goal-posts.

His release was just in time to escape the enemies that were thundering toward the spot. Jim was six feet one inch tall, and had the figure of an Apollo. No more thrilling picture can be imagined than when he came down the field with all his enemies behind him, his sinewy legs doubling under him with bewildering swiftness, the ball hugged to his breast, his mop-like hair streaming in the wind, his eyes agleam, his face flushed, and every nerve keyed to the highest point.

Of the thirty thousand spectators, I do not think there was one who was not screaming, shouting, waving colours, and dancing with uncontrollable excitement.

“Run, Hart, run! Hurry, Tom! Quick! you’ve got him, Jones!” were some of the frantic appeals of the friends of the Nipantics, while there was little semblance to anything among the lunatics on our side.

“That’s our Jim! God bless him!” shouted Hugh Carroll at my side, his face purple, and his voice husky.

“O mamma! that’s Jim!” shouted Jennie Winters, clapping her hands and leaping up and down; “that’s my brother Jim! Run, Jim! *Run! RUN!*”

Mrs. Winters was also on her feet, and it was

the only time in my life that I saw her lose her self-control. Poor woman, she was crying with joy. To think that that grand youth, the centre of thousands of admiring eyes, was only a few years before a baby at her breast, and that she had taught him his infantile prayer at her knee! It seemed all a bewildering dream.

Jim's father was another lunatic. It was impossible to make out amid the pandemonium what he was saying, but he was shrieking some wild directions to his boy, and threatening him with dire punishment if he disregarded them.

At this instant, I became aware that some one was banging me over the head with an umbrella. It had probably been going on for several minutes, but that was the first that I realised it. My hat was battered out of shape, and when I turned to learn the cause, there stood Dominie Helmuth, screeching something to Jim, waving his hat with one hand, while he was sawing the air with his green cotton umbrella grasped in the other, and bringing it down at regular and rapid intervals upon my doomed crown.

I dodged out of the way, and the next blow, landing on nothing, came near precipitating the good man on his face, but he continued to saw the air, and never knew what an exhibition he made of himself.

Meanwhile, Jim Winters had circled around one

of the goal-posts, and stooping behind them made a touch-down. Then with the excitement still at its height, he came back upon the field and prepared to kick for a goal. Although there was a wind blowing, he aimed truly, and smote the spheroid with such power and skill that it passed exactly between the posts. Thus the score stood six to nothing, and thus it stood when a few minutes later the whistle sounded, and the great struggle was over.

As I was moving off the ground, Mr. Winters touched my arm.

"I say, when Jim comes home, it will be well not to remind him of that wrestling bout he and I agreed to have after his graduation."

I promised to keep silent, and so it came about that the deciding struggle between Jim and his father is still in the future.

CHAPTER XXI.

WOOING AND WINNING

JIM WINTERS's future career was decided upon while in college: it was the study of law, and he gladly accepted the invitation of Judge Whiteley to enter his office in Oakdale. The judge was one of the most learned gentlemen on the bench, and he never would have asked the youth to become one of his "boys" had he not liked him.

It was four miles from the home of Jim to the office of the judge, and through summer and winter the young man walked each way. His father offered him the use of a horse, but the young giant said the exercise was too pleasant to lose, and what matter if there was a foot of snow on the ground, or the tempest raged? It was all the more pleasant when he reached the glowing, comfortable office that awaited him at one end, or the warm, loving home at the other.

One of the trials of a popular college athlete is from his admirers. They force themselves upon him, until in self-defence he is often obliged to snub them in order to retain his own peace of

mind. No victor in the contests of skill could accept one-tenth of the favours thrust upon him, and most of his would-be friends are of a kind for which he never can care anything.

Jim Winters suffered in this respect, and it required all his firmness and tact to rid himself of more than one nuisance. At the same time, he made many genial acquaintances, the most important of whom was Dick Hull, the son of a New York millionaire. He was bright, witty, and talented, but inclined to be indolent, which perhaps was not to be wondered at, when he was never allowed to know the want of a dollar. His parents denied him nothing, and he spent money as if it were water. On the last trip of the football eleven to New York, he insisted upon paying all the expenses, and he and his father were the two wildest of the thousands of lunatics, when the crisis of the battle came.

But a great change came over Dick while in college, and he announced his intention of preparing himself for the ministry. His father had intended him for the law, and was disappointed, but he could refuse no request to his only child, and encouraged him to go on in his chosen profession.

Jim accepted the invitation to visit Dick at his elegant home in the metropolis, where he was welcomed with a warmth and cordiality that his

own parents could not have surpassed. Those two looked upon Jim as a football hero, as he really was, and his boyish modesty captured their hearts. He never had a more pleasant visit, and when about to go home, compelled Dick to promise to return the visit the following summer.

"I can give you no such elegancies and luxuries as I have received," said Jim, "but I can assure you of a welcome as warm as yours has been, and nothing can surpass *that*."

"If alive, I shall be there on time," replied the jovial Dick.

No one dreamed of the result that followed this visit. Dick stayed two weeks, which was double the time originally intended, and when his sense of good taste prompted him to go, it was evident that he did so reluctantly. For Dick, it was the first time he had ever seen an ideal home. The trusting love among the members of the family, the genial sunshine that never was darkened, the mutual affection, the refinement, the comradeship, so to speak, was a revelation, and seemed to him like a glimpse of what the faithful shall enjoy hereafter.

Jennie Winters was at this time one of the most winsome girls I have ever looked upon. She had the dark, lustrous eyes that showed in Jim and their mother, the same soft, silken, curly hair, while her cheeks possessed a delicate sea-shell

pink all their own. Her features were faultless, and no one could have prettier teeth. She was as fond as her brother of outdoor life, and in her way was as healthy, supple, and far more graceful than he.

These were a part of her physical attractions that would have awakened admiration anywhere. But deeper, truer, and purer gold than all these were her mental and moral qualities. She had all of Jim's quickness of perception and wit, his moral heroism, and his impregnable principles. She would never willingly consent to leave her home to attend a boarding-school, because she loved that home and its inmates too deeply to part with them, but under the guidance of Mr. Hanaford she acquired an excellent education, while the instruction of competent teachers in music added that accomplishment.

It was curious that, of all the four members of the Winters household, there was not one who suspected what became the real attraction, the irresistible lodestone, for Dick Hull before he had spent two days under the roof. When the time came for him to bid Jim good-bye at the railway station, he took his hand and asked, with that frankness that was one of his most engaging qualities :

“ Will you be offended, Jim, if I tell you something ? ”

"Nothing that you can say will offend me."

"I am in love with your sister Jennie; it is no fancy or passing admiration, but genuine, honest love."

"But, Dick," said the bewildered Jim, "she is only a child."

"I know she is young, but she'll get over that if she lives long enough. Now, I shall be straightforward in all this; I haven't given the girl herself so much as a hint, but, with the consent of you and her parents, I shall strive to win her love, willing to defer to the wishes of all four of you, whatever they may be, for what one of you thinks the other three are sure to agree with. Old boy, if your conscience will permit you, say a good word for me, won't you? Good-bye; God bless you!"

He stepped aboard the train and was off. The words that his friend had uttered filled the mind of Jim all through the day. It seemed so absurd to think of Jennie becoming a wife, and yet she was seventeen years old, older than many others who have taken that important step, though still too young to do so.

It was impossible, as Dick Hull had said, for any member of that family to keep such a secret from the others, and that evening Jim repeated every word that his friend said to him upon parting. Jennie filled the room with laughter, for the

thought had never come to her, but the deeper lustre of those brown eyes, the richer tinge that stole into the sea-shell, told of the depths that had been stirred, even so gently by the tremulous wand of love. Her nature had been touched, though the maiden herself did not suspect it.

It was agreed that Jennie was too young to think of marriage for several years, but Dick Hull had made a good impression upon all, and they felt favourably inclined toward him. His course was manly from the first. He wrote a long letter to Jennie, with the request that she would show it to her parents and brother (an unnecessary suggestion) before replying. He repeated what he had said to Jim, but added that he could not deny that she was too young to think of marrying any one for some time to come. It rested with her to decide whether he should entertain any hope of trying to win her affection. It would be three years before his graduation from the theological seminary, and it was his wish that, when he went to his first appointment, he should take Jennie with him as his wife. If she lived she would then be of proper age, and, in the meantime, he would do his utmost to win her respect, even if denied her love.

The reply which Jennie Winters wrote to this honourable letter was in exquisite taste, due partly to the fact that it was the joint composition of

every member of the family. She expressed her regard for him as a gentleman, and thanked him for the compliment he had paid her, for to be the one selected from among all women is the highest compliment that any woman can receive from man. She could not answer truthfully as to her sentiments, other than to say that she liked every friend of her brother, and she should always be glad to welcome him to their home.

"Dick's a good fellow," said Jim in one of those confidential exchanges of sentiments; "something about him attracted me the first time we met. He was always candid, truthful, and open, and he will make a successful preacher. He has asked me to spend a few weeks with him during the Christmas holidays, but we are so busy at the office that I can't really afford the time, and if you have no objections I shall ask him to make us a visit."

The proposal suited the others, and the happy Dick, as full of waggery, good nature, and honest admiration for Jennie as ever, was only too glad to accept the invitation. The correspondence of the couple had been kept up regularly during the interval.

Dick made good progress with his suit upon his second visit to the Winters home. Since his position was understood, and there was no reason for secrecy, he pressed his advantage to the utmost.

In a little more than two years he would be graduated, if all went well. He would be twenty-three years old and Jennie twenty. Surely, if they loved each other, there was no reason why they should not become husband and wife. Permission was finally given to the couple to engage themselves, and they did so.

One of the most delightful features of this happy affair was the course of Dick's parents. He might have made a brilliant match among the aristocracy of the metropolis, for he was attractive personally, possessed great wealth, and his social position was of the highest; but when he told his parents that he meant to win the love of that humble daughter of humble parentage, away out in the country, the father promptly said:

"I have never seen her, but I have met her brother; and, if she is as fine a girl as he is a man, you couldn't do better."

"Go where your heart goes, if it is worthily bestowed," was the comment of the mother; "the match of Joshua, your father, and me was a love match, and I am sure neither of us has ever regretted it."

"You are right, mother," heartily assented her husband.

Since the son's opinion of his fiancée was naturally one-sided, it was arranged that Jim should call in a few days with his sister in order that

she might make the acquaintance of her future parents-in-law.

That sweet, modest, sparkling-eyed little woman captured the father and mother at once. In the sweet, sad long ago they had laid to rest the one daughter that God gave them for a time and then took to himself, and there was something in the dainty winsomeness of Jennie that recalled the one that was and yet was not. They took her to their hearts, and the mother spoke only the simple truth when they were alone :

“ My dear child, since becoming acquainted with you, Mr. Hull has said, and his feelings are mine, there is no woman in the world whom we should rather see the wife of Dick than yourself.”

“ You are very kind to say so, and I know you mean it. I shall do my best to be a helpful wife to him, for I love him with my whole heart and he loves me the same.”

“ There can be no doubt of that. You know we met your brother before we did you, and the fact that you are his sister was your best recommendation.”

“ How grateful I am that I have been blessed with such parents and so noble a brother.”

“ Dick has told us of that sweet home where love reigns supreme, and I long to see it.”

“ And you *must* see it,—you and Mr. Hull.”

The promised visit was made the following May, when the apple orchards were in bloom, and the fragrance of flowers filled the air, and the birds made music among the trees. It was an event to the wealthy couple the memory of which remained with them like a blessing through the remainder of their lives.

The following spring Dick Hull and Jennie Winters were married and went to their home in the central part of New York State. The appointment was an excellent one, for Dick possessed unusual ability, and doubtless his social standing had its effect. It need not be said the couple were happy. They were lovers from the first, and will be to the end of their lives. When Dick's parents passed away, they left him more than a million and a half dollars, and yet no one unacquainted with the fact would have suspected it. Under the tutelage of Jim Winters, the preacher had learned the meaning of practical charity. His liberal salary was paid promptly, for his congregation was a wealthy one, and it sufficed mainly for his wants, but he did a vast deal in a way that was hardly known outside of the beneficiaries. There was scarcely a time when he was not paying the total expenses of eight or ten young men at college, and sometimes the number was greater. He regarded himself as the almoner of the wealth that had come unsought

and unearned to him, and no one could have distributed it with better judgment.

Jennie spent a portion of each year at her home, in the society of her parents and brother, and she would never permit a summer to come and go without all three of them passing at least several weeks under her roof. It became the regular thing for Jim to devote his vacation to fishing, hunting, and rambling over the delightful country with his sister and brother-in-law, and those days were among the happiest of their lives.

But no one is absolved from affliction in this life, and a great blow descended upon that loving household. The first-born, a bright, sunshiny boy named for Jim, whom the big uncle almost idolised, was seized with sudden illness and died within the following twenty-four hours, before either Jim or his parents, who had been summoned by telegraph, could reach the stricken home.

It was an almost fatal blow to the mother, and the father was prostrated. But never did the sustaining grace of God shine more beautifully than in that household, where the parents were able to say with honest hearts: "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be His name."

Other children came to them, and one bore again the honoured name of the brother. The

little boy that had gone before could never be forgotten, but the loss served to draw all nearer to one another and to their heavenly Father, and to make them more devoted to His blessed work on earth.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN UNEXPECTED HONOUR

JUST one week after Jim Winters's admission to the bar and his acceptance of a partnership with Judge Whiteley, some one knocked at the door of his home at Midvale. It was late on a cool night in autumn, the sky was studded with stars, and a keen wind was blowing.

Jim went to the door and saw three men standing in the gloom, whom he did not recognise until they spoke. Then he saw that they were acquaintances living in Oakdale.

"Good evening, Mr. Winters; we've called to see you on business."

He invited them in, and they shook hands with the parents, who were also known to them. After a few remarks about the weather and crops, Mr. Kell, the spokesman, made known their errand.

"Mr. Winters, we have called upon what is pleasant business for us, and we hope it will be the same to you. At our district convention held in Oakdale this evening you were unanimously nominated for the House of Assembly."

"Whew!" whistled Jim, "I never dreamt of such a thing."

"There were half a dozen after the nomination, but, when Kimpton here mentioned your name, they were all snowed under; there was a regular stampede to you."

The faces of Jim and his parents flushed with pleasure, for it surely was a compliment of which any man might feel proud.

"It is very gratifying to hear that, especially as the subject has never before been mentioned in my presence."

Mr. Kell was a man who believed in taking time by the forelock.

"Then of course you accept; we were appointed a committee to wait on you and notify you of your nomination. It is so late, and you are such a distance from town, that we can hardly inform the convention this evening, but to-morrow will be time enough."

"One moment," said Jim, as Mr. Kell rose to his feet; "you must give me a few hours to think over the matter; what do you say, pop, and mother?" he asked, turning to them.

"It is an honour that any man might covet," replied his father; "my impulse is to advise you to accept the nomination, but it will do no harm to wait until to-morrow."

The mother nodded her head.

"Those are my views."

"The *Bugle* goes to press to-morrow and election is only two weeks off, so there is no time to lose," observed Mr. Kell, standing with his hand on the door-knob, while his companions, who had also risen, added a word about the need of promptness.

"My inclination is to accept," remarked Jim, "but it is proper that I should consult Judge Whiteley. You must remember, too," added the prospective candidate, with a smile, "that our party is in the minority in this district."

This remark unloosed the tongue of Mr. Thompson, a hitherto comparatively quiet member of the committee. "It is your duty to stand; you are the only man we can win with; we shall sweep the district with you; it's a dead sure thing; you mustn't think of backing out; it's your Christian duty to lead us to victory."

"I am afraid, Mr. Thompson, that you overestimate my strength; who is my opponent?"

"Dick Warnock, of Pittsville; he was nominated on Monday night."

"I know Mr. Warnock; he is quite popular and has a wealthy father to back him."

"But he'll be nowhere against you; why, he won't know he's been running."

"Well, gentlemen, I am much obliged to you, and beg you to thank the convention that has

done me this honour; you shall hear from me to-morrow."

With a few parting words the committee withdrew, and Jim was left alone with his parents. He would not have been human had he not been affected by the offer of this nomination to the legislature. He was nervous and pleased, for it was another proof of the confidence felt in him by his fellow citizens.

"It all depends on what the judge says," he remarked, after the question had been fully discussed; "he has been kind enough to take me in as a partner, and there is a great deal of work cut out for me; I feel it my duty to respect his wishes in the matter."

On the morrow, Jim went to town early. It was a bright, cool autumn morning, and he was in buoyant spirits. He hoped the judge would advise him to run, but he was resolved none the less to be guided by his advice.

"Run!" repeated the judge, who had heard the news, "why, of course you'll run; it will be a good training for you; you will gain a practical knowledge of legislation that will be of vast benefit in your profession; besides," he added, with a twinkle of his eyes, "I want to find out how my junior partner stands in the community."

"Very well, I shall accept the nomination, but don't forget, judge, that there is a normal majority

of more than three hundred against our party in this district, and it is great conceit on my part to expect to overcome that."

"Tut, tut, my boy ; the candidate who goes into a canvass believing he will be beaten is already beaten ; throw your whole energies into the work ; take off your coat ; stump the district from one end to the other ; hunt through the old almanacs for some good stories to tell, and don't try to be too learned in your speeches ; keep sober ; don't whoop it up with the boys, for that will drive away the respectable votes ; keep out of the saloons ; be a good fellow, and don't stop work till the polls are closed on the night of election. In other words, *hustle !*"

The committee soon called for Jim's answer. He had already sent a note to the *Bugle of Liberty*, accepting the nomination, and the gentlemen, when informed of his decision, rushed out of the office swinging their hats and cheering at the tops of their voices. The fight was on.

All through the day the callers came and went. Jim had to shake hands again and again, and reply to the congratulations and good wishes of his friends, among whom, it was to be noted, were the best people in the place. A new candidate is apt to suspect under such conditions that the majority are with him, and to wonder how it is his opponent has the temerity to pit himself against

him ; but there was truth in the remark of Judge Whiteley that Jim had not been called upon by anything like one-half the voters in his district, and among those that had pledged their support were many who had no intention of voting for him.

Jim was pleased to receive a visit from Dick Warnock toward the close of the day. They warmly shook hands, and sat down for a few private words.

"I'm glad and I'm sorry, Jim, that you are my opponent," remarked Warnock, who, although possessing little moral stamina, was well educated, and possessed the natural instincts of a gentleman.

"Why glad and why sorry?" asked Jim.

"I am glad because two gentlemen are to run against each other ; there will be no mud-slinging, no personalities, and nothing to cause hard feeling."

"I am sure of that so far as you and I are concerned, and I shall permit nothing of the kind by any of my friends."

"Shake!" said Dick, impulsively extending his hand, which was cordially grasped by his opponent.

"And now what cause have you for sorrow, Dick?"

"Because your party have put up their strongest man. Against any one else, I should have felt no

misgiving, but it will take the sharpest kind of hustling for me to overcome your popularity."

" You forget that you have a good majority to start with."

" I am far from forgetting that ; were it otherwise I should withdraw from the canvass,— I mean it ! " he added, catching the smile on the face of his friend.

" You are altogether too flattering, Dick ; I shall work hard to win, now that I am committed to the work, but I shall not spend any money, nor buy a single vote."

" That's right ! that's right ! " exclaimed the caller, with suspicious ardour ; " that's my position in starting out, and is a part of my platform. I tell you I sometimes fear for our country, when I see how corruption and bribery win at the polls. And then, aside from the morality of the thing, how absurd it all is in a business way ! Say that you and I spend a thousand dollars apiece to control votes, we stand relatively just as we should if we had not spent a cent. Therefore, two thousand dollars has been worse than thrown away, since it has been used to corrupt the voters."

" That is a truthful view of the situation, but I suppose each candidate is afraid to trust his opponent, and so they appeal to dishonesty."

" Well," said Dick, rising to go, " there's nothing of the kind between you and me ; no matter

who wins, the people shall have a clean, honest election."

The two shook hands again, and Dick hurried to his carriage waiting outside, where one of his intimate friends was seated with the lines in his hands. Each lit a cigarette and started off, with the fleet steppers going at a spanking pace.

In a few minutes, they were beyond the limits of Oakdale, and spinning over the smooth highway in the direction of Engleton, a town of about half the size of Oakdale. There by appointment Dick met the two clergymen of the place for a frank talk.

Had one been present at that interview, with no knowledge of the caller, he would have set him down for a young man who had serious thoughts of entering the ministry, and had called for counsel in the matter. When one of the good men in golden spectacles and white choker expressed his sorrow over the prevalence of inebriety, Dick assured him that it was the crying evil of the age, and the subject had caused him many an hour of anxious thought. Assuredly everything that he could possibly do to lessen the evil of drunkenness would be gladly done. He would favour a local option bill, and, in fact, every practical effort on the side of temperance, should his fellow citizens honour him by an election to the legislature. The interview was most satisfactory on the part of all,

and, since Mr. Warnock was at the head of the ticket which represented the political sentiments of the clergymen, they agreed that it was best to give him their support, and to do what they could, consistent with their position in the community, to assist in his election, without taking the trouble to consult Mr. Winters, of whom they had heard nothing but good words.

After driving from the door of the parsonage, Dick and his friend took a course to a secluded part of the town in one of the back streets, where they entered the most prominent drinking saloon. A large crowd seemed to be expecting Dick, and he was received with hurrahs as he pushed through the door, and had to shake hands with the whole party. While doing so, he insisted (though precious little insistence was necessary) that all should step to the bar and drink and smoke at his expense.

When, at last, the candidate was through with the rabble, he stepped into a private room at the rear, accompanied by the proprietor of the saloon and a well-known resident, the two being the political leaders, or bosses, of the place.

"You've seen the dominies, have you?" asked the corpulent landlord, who was smoking a big cigar (that Dick had paid for three times over), and wore a blazing diamond in his shirt-front.

"Yes; just came from there."

"Fixed 'em all right?"

"You been give it to 'em straight; told 'em I was in favor of putting down whiskey, as I've just proved to you," said Dick, with a smile over the old ~~wastebasket~~.

"That's good; that's politics; you're doing the right thing," remarked the other boss; "you've made it dead easy for us all, but we must work things on the quiet."

"I'm depending on you, boys, to manage them for me; do you want any funds?"

"Well, if we had a few hundreds, I reckon we could do some good with it."

"Let me see," said Dick, producing his fat wallet, "I gave you a couple of hundred last week; how much will you need to see things through?"

"Do you mean to the close of election?"

"Yes, so that I sha'n't have to do anything more."

The boss smoked his cigar, and looked up at the ceiling, as if he and the landlord had not fixed the sum before the candidate arrived. Turning toward his partner, he said:

"Bill, I'm a little afeared of them boys down in the Holler; they talk and act all right, but they always have an extra vote up their sleeves. Nothing but money will fetch 'em."

"You're right," assented the landlord; "'Lige Sykes, their leader, was in here yesterday, and give me to understand that, if there wasn't some

boodle sent down to the Holler mighty soon, they'd all vote for Winters, whether he paid or not."

"He isn't going to put a cent into the campaign," remarked Dick, holding his pocketbook unopened, while he puffed his cigarette.

The boss looked at him, and solemnly winked one eye.

"*He* won't put any in, because he hasn't got it to put in, but there are plenty of others who'll back him."

"Well, how much do you want, boys?"

"To make a dead cinch of it, we need five hundred dollars."

Truth to tell, Dick Warnock expected a larger demand than this, and was prepared for it. He laid down the money without a murmur.

"Come, Sam," he said to his companion, "we must reach Neville before dark; you'll join us in a round at the bar. Once more, boys!" he shouted, as he burst into the bar-room, where the crowd was awaiting him, and promptly accepted his invitation. All joined in a cheer, as he and his companion sprang into their carriage, and drove off to continue their electioneering in other portions of the district.

While it was understood that the large amounts of money that Dick turned over to the different managers was to meet all demands, yet the candidate did not escape personal importunities that

were almost numberless. He knew that he ought to refuse such cases, but he yielded in a greater or less degree to every one. He was bountifully furnished with money by his father, and he did not mean to lose a cent if he could save it for himself. He felt, however, that his victory could not be assured until he had arranged matters with "Colonel Knicker," of whom more hereafter.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ON THE STUMP

As the canvass progressed, Jim Winters enjoyed it. There was that in the excitement, the uncertainty, the varying hopes and prospects that pleased him. Several good speakers were brought into the district, and did effective service. Jim himself was in demand, and there was hardly a week-day night on which he did not make an address of some kind to his constituents.

He was a pleasing speaker, possessing a certain magnetism that was attractive, and he was never at a loss for words. There was sound sense in the advice of Judge Whiteley not to make his speeches tiresome with too much learning. While the candidate made his political and moral sentiments clear, and had something to say in a general way concerning the great public questions before the country, he sprinkled his talk with pleasant anecdote and remarks in lighter vein. Altogether, he was voted to be a first-class stump-speaker.

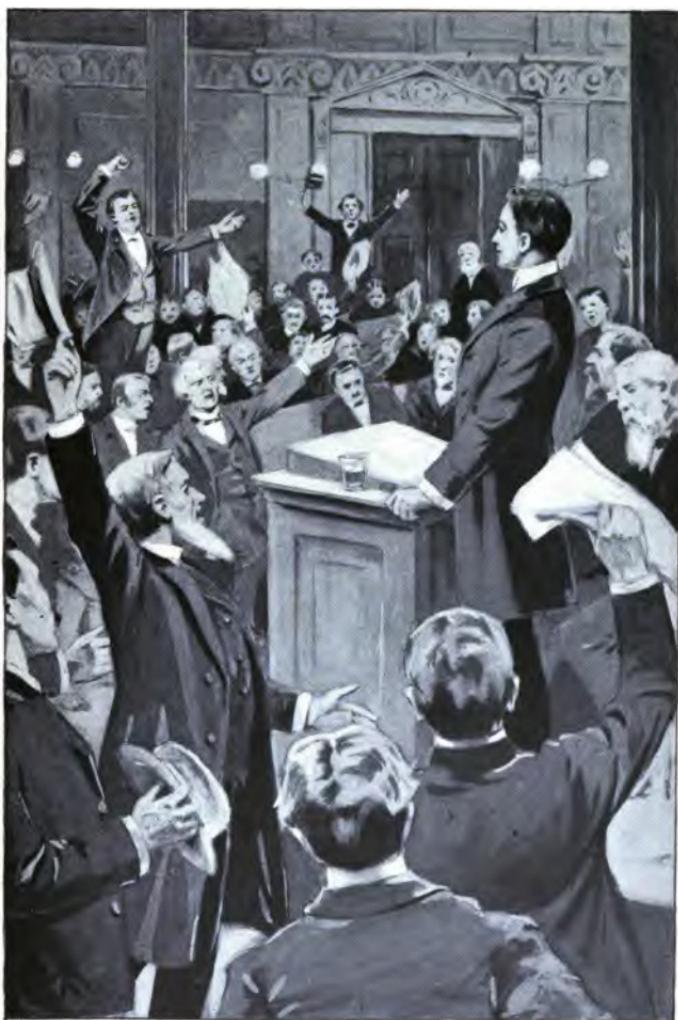
What an impulsive people we Americans are!

Jim had been warned by those who wished him well that it was useless for him to visit Engleton, or make any effort in that section. Even the two clergymen were captured by Warnock, while the saloon people had been "signed, sealed, and delivered." Nevertheless, Jim rode to Engleton one evening, unaccompanied by any one, and found the only public hall in the place crowded to the doors. He knew the audience was unfriendly, but he did not expect any personal ill treatment.

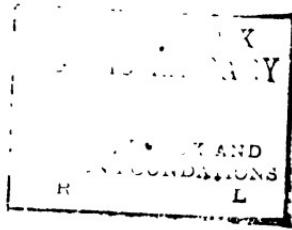
He won a respectful hearing by a few humorous stories, but it was not long before he was met by interruptions, hisses, and insolent questions. Evidently the political friends of Warnock had done their work well and were afraid of the inroad which this handsome young athlete was likely to make into their ranks.

That which alienated the majority of his hearers was Jim's plea for temperance and a higher plane of morality. This was too "personal" to be accepted meekly by those in front of him. The resentment, however, thus excited was more intense than even Jim expected. He was obliged to stop speaking until the turbulence subsided enough to permit him to be heard.

But it seemed to increase rather than diminish, and several rough characters made as if they meant to climb the platform and drive the speaker from it. Jim felt no personal fear, and calmly



"**I PROPOSE THREE CHEERS FOR JIM WINTERS!"**



awaited the partial quiet which must come sooner or later, though the situation threatened serious consequences to himself.

In the crisis of the tumult, a tall, powerful man sprang upon one of the benches, and called out in a voice of thunder :

“Order, gentlemen ! order ! hear me !”

A useless appeal, since deafness alone could have prevented their hearing him. Something like stillness followed, and the man, in the same ringing voice that must have reached several blocks away, shouted :

“Do you know who the speaker is ? If you don’t, I’ll tell you ! He’s Jim Winters, the man that won the baseball and football championship for Belmore College, and the best fellow in the United States of America ! I’ve known Jim since he was a little boy, and if anybody wants to dispute it he can step outside with me and we’ll settle it mighty quick.”

The challenger made as if to take off his coat, but changed his mind, since, among the scores gazing at him, he saw none that was disposed to accept his challenge. He was a stalwart six-footer, and his neighbours were acquainted with his prowess.

“All right !” he roared ; “I propose three cheers for Jim Winters ! Are you ready ? All together !”

And every man in that large audience joined in cheering the man whom but a few minutes before they had been deriding. The scapegoat became the hero in the twinkling of an eye.

Jim was wise enough not to attempt to add to the work of his ally, who crowded forward with others to take his hand. While Jim was thanking him, his friend said :

"I guess you don't remember me, eh?" and his grin showed his white teeth through the abundant whiskers.

"I can't say that I do recall your features, although there is something that suggests a friend of my boyhood."

"That's it; do you remember, a good many years ago, the four youngsters that were sneaking along the edge of the woods one summer day on their way to steal a big watermelon from Deacon Bolus's patch? Just before they could do it, you reminded them that they were about to commit a sin, and all backed out. Now, who were those three boys that were with you?"

"I can never forget them; they were Dick Ashmore, Jo Egmont, and a wee bit of a fellow named Johnny Marvin; I've often wondered what became of Johnny."

"I'm Johnny Marvin."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the delighted Jim,

shaking the horny palm; "you have so grown and changed that I never should have suspected it."

"All the same I'm Johnny; I've got a farm a half-mile out, a sweet wife and three children; I wish you would go out and stay all night with me."

"I intended to drive home this evening, but this is too much pleasure to lose; yes, I'll be glad to go with you."

It was a delightful night that Jim Winters spent with his friend and family. The larger children had not retired, and it did not take Jim long to win their hearts, as he quickly did that of the mother and of the younger children, the following morning.

From Marvin, Jim received a confirmation of a rumour that had been well authenticated before. Dick Warnock, despite his pledge to the contrary, had given out a large amount of money to be expended in "making it right" with the voters, and he was confident of carrying that part of the district by an overwhelming majority. Jim made no reference to this breach of faith on the part of his opponent.

"Jim, I'm on the other side of you in politics," said Marvin, "but I'm not only going to vote for you, but I shall work for you till the polls close. I had the offer of a good lump of money to handle

"I know all that, Jim, and that I was a Harry
Hornet, and a hawk at that, is I guess what I
thought."

"I think you are right, Jim. It's been a long time since
you and I last spoke, but I do have genuine
regret over it. I didn't believe in my authority
as a teacher. I think there would have been a
better way."

"I don't feel so bad. It made me think of
the first time a teacher tried to teach, and I was in
the schoolroom sitting in my seat more than once.
It taught me best to wait; however the first
lesson I had to learn against you would have
been a hard one."

"I did the second against mine," added Jim,
with a smile of his friend.

"And I believe you can strike harder than me;
but do you know, Jim, what it was that won me
over to say 'no'?"

"I judged it to be the part I had taken when in
charge in your playing."

"That was to catch the crowd, and it looks to
me as if it did it, but all the time you were talking
I was thinking of that summer afternoon, a long
time ago, when we four boys started out to steal
that melon of Deacon Bolus and you gave us a lot
of plain truths straight from the shoulder. It was
one of those things that sometimes cling to a fel-
low through life; it has had a good influence on

me, and I shall remember it if I live to be a hundred years old."

Somehow or other these words gave Jim Winters more pleasure than could have come from the assurance of his political success.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DANGER IN THE AIR

“Good evening, Mr. Winters !”

It was a cool night, with a slight rain falling outside. Mrs. Winters had retired and Jim was sitting with his father, talking over the progress of his political campaign, when they were interrupted by the knock on the door, which was no sooner opened than three men solemnly walked in, removed their hats, and sat down.

Jim recognised the leader as Archie Gunther, who served as pound-keeper, constable, and general man about town, ready for anything that would bring him a little revenue. Archie's most notable characteristic was his slovenliness of dress. As a rule, he looked like a tramp, and was never cleanly in person. His most creditable record was that during his half-vagrant career he had saved fully a dozen persons from drowning. None the less the man was a general nuisance.

Without the least embarrassment, Archie advanced, shook the hands of son and father, and then, stepping back, introduced his companions.

"This is Mr. Hubbs,—George Washington Hubbs, the vice-president and treasurer of our club."

Mr. Hubbs wore a hat of the bell-crowned variety, and of unusual height and with scarcely a perceptible rim. It now glistened with the moisture that had fallen upon it, and of course was held in his hand. Although Mr. Hubbs wore no collar that was perceptible, he had on a high, old-fashioned stock, the tie of which had slipped around under his ear. His coat was buttoned closely to his chin, but the first button had been fastened just one place below the right opening, and it was the same all the way down the front, so that the garment was somewhat askew. The trousers were very tight and the shoes large.

In response to the introduction, Mr. Hubbs rose to his feet, bowed very profoundly, sat down again and recrossed his legs, without opening his mouth.

"And this is Mr. Spriggens,—Lafayette Spriggens, the secretary of our club," added Archie, indicating by a wave of his hand his other companion, and thereupon Mr. Spriggens arose, bowed, and silently sat down again. He was of short stature and carried a small cap in his hand. His hair was frousy, his face round and suspiciously red, as it shone through his stubby beard, and it was noticeable that his vision was crossed, so that it was difficult to decide in what direction he was

looking. His garments were slovenly, and much the same in fashion as those of Archie himself.

It had evidently been agreed upon before calling, that Archie was to do the talking, for neither of the others showed for some time any disposition to take part in the conversation. There was something in all this that appealed to the humorous side of Jim Winters's nature ; and, when the three were seated in front of him with their legs crossed, their countenances preternaturally solemn, he said to the leader, in the kindest of tones :

“ You spoke a few minutes ago, Archie, of some club of which you and your friends are members, but I did not catch the name.”

“ The Rescue Club ; didn't you see an account of it in the *Bugle*? ”

“ I do not recall that I did ; you have chosen quite an expressive name, but what does it mean in your case ? ”

So far as the soiled face of Archie would permit, he blushed. He had a curious way of smiling on one side of his mouth, while the other was not changed.

“ I s'pose you've heerd that I've done something in the way of rescuing drowning persons ? ”

“ Indeed I have ; you have done noble work in that direction, for which you deserve a great deal of gratitude. Are your friends in the same line ? ”

“ Yes, that's it ; Mr. Hubbs is a life-saver, too.”

"Ah, how many has he been the means of rescuing?"

"He hain't rescued none just yet, 'cause he hasn't had the chance, but he's on deck, and the next chap that pitches into the canal or river will have Hubbs after him, that is if Spriggens or me ain't on the ground first."

"Then Spriggens is also a beginner?"

"Yes; he's one of the men that I saved; he was walking alongside the canal last week, when he walks straight into it."

"Was it during the daytime?"

"In the middle of the afternoon."

"What made him do so foolish a thing?"

Spriggens seemed to think it incumbent upon him to clear up matters.

"The truth was, Mr. Winters," he said, with an odd chuckle, "I had a little too much aboard and couldn't help it."

"That ought to be a lesson to you."

"So it was, so it was," and to show his earnestness, Spriggens uncrossed his legs and then crossed them again, coughed, shook his head, and vigorously nursed his cap on his knee.

"It was me that pulled him out," remarked Archie, as if the incident was of small account, "and then I give him lessons of how to haul other people ashore when they was drowning. I fell in myself —"

"Not from the same reason that Mr. Spriggens did?"

"Oh, no, on purpose to let him try his hand; it took a long time to git him to do it right; he would try to grab my leg and pull me out by that, which is a bad way to handle a drowning person, Mr. Winters."

"It certainly has that look."

"Howsumever, he got the hang of it after awhile, and now I'm proud to say that Spriggens and Hubbs can do the trick almost as well as myself. So we organised the Rescue Club, with me for president, Hubbs for vice-president and treasurer, and Spriggens for secretary."

"How many active members have you?"

"Fifteen, with more coming in all the time; by Christmas we oughter have thirty or forty. Then," added Archie, with his queer smile, "we have lots of ornery members; Judge Whiteley and the governor are ornery members, and your name has been proposed."

"I was not aware that I had been so honoured," replied Jim, managing by a hard effort to keep a grave countenance. He had clearly seen before this what was coming and was rapidly leading up to it.

"Your object is certainly a worthy one; how long since you organised?"

"Only two weeks, and we're growing fast."

"Do you take any part in politics?"

"Oh, yes," was the smiling reply; "that's one of the objects of the Rescue Club."

"Ah, on which side?"

This was coming to the point that had brought Archie and his friends from town. He was glad to be thus aided.

"We had a full meeting of the club last night with me in the chair, and I put the question as to which candidate, Warnock or Winters, the Rescue Club should support, and, Mr. Winters," added Archie, impressively, "it was unanermous for *you*."

"Why, how is that? It cannot be that all your men belong to the same party?"

"Party hain't nothin' to do with such things when the club goes inter the business: it's the *men*; I told our members that you was a square man and would help them to raise funds to rent a hall fur our meetings, buy boats, ropes, and appliancers fur rescuing drowning persons; why," added Archie, waxing eloquent and half rising from his chair in his earnestness, "I pledged 'em my honour that I'd git twenty-five dollars out of you to-night, and I was named as a committee with Mr. Hubbs and Spriggens to come out here and git it."

"There is no mistake about this, Archie?"

"No, sir, how could there be—ain't I right, boys?" he abruptly asked, wheeling toward his

associates. The vice-president solemnly bowed his head, blinked his eyes, and said, in a sepulchral voice :

"Correct!" while the secretary fidgeted and replied, nervously, "That's right, — that's right."

"I am sorry, Archie, that you and your friends should attempt this deception, but my father here heard you three forming your plot this forenoon, by which you planned to get this money out of me, after having gone to Mr. Warnock with the same story and secured money from him. Now you may go home, and on the road think over the old homely truth that honesty is the best policy. Good night."

Jim rose while speaking and held open the door. The dazed callers passed silently out in the drizzle and gloom. At the gate, the president found his voice and called back : " You're beaten, 'cause the Rescue Club is agin you."

CHAPTER XXV.

A THREAT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

IT was late, and after some jesting over the call of the president of the Rescue Club, Mr. Winters bade his boy good night and went up-stairs to bed. Jim did not feel drowsy and took up the last copy of the *Bugle of Liberty*, to read what it had to say concerning the political situation. The paper was neutral in politics and aimed to be impartial, going to the extent of complimenting the residents of the district upon having two such unexceptionable candidates claiming the suffrages of the people. "Which ever of the eminent gentlemen wins," it said, "we shall be sure of being worthily represented in the law-making body of our State."

Through the stillness of the night, with the fine misty rain falling and the gentle wind soughing among the branches of the trees, Jim Winters heard the sound of a horse's hoofs, growing more distinct each moment.

"Can it be that I am to have another caller?" he mused.

He laid the newspaper in his lap and listened. The hoof-beats came nearer at a rate that showed the animal was galloping. Then the rhythmic footfalls changed, showing that the horse had dropped to a walk, after which they abruptly ceased. Yes ; the horseman had halted in front of the house.

A minute was occupied in hitching to the post, and then Jim heard the gate open and the hasty crunch of the man's boots on the gravel. He stepped briskly upon the porch, and while the other was fumbling for the bell, Jim opened the door, letting the flood of light stream out of doors.

"Good evening, Mr. Winters ; I beg pardon for calling so late ; the necessity of haste in my business must be my excuse."

Jim saw a tall man in a cap and storm coat which glistened with moisture, standing on the porch in front of him. Bidding him welcome, he closed the door, and the visitor slipped off his rubber garment and hung it and his cap on the rack, and followed his host into the sitting-room.

Jim had already recognised the man as Colonel Zeph Kudger, one of the most famous lobbyists of the country, and the special representative of the great Quadmore Railway Company. His special province was to look after the members of the legislature, both actual and prospective, and that was the business that had brought him out in the

country to the home of Jim Winters, thus late in the evening. He was neatly dressed, without any display of jewelry, was clean shaven, alert of manner, suave and pleasing, with a bright, quick eye, and of necessity he possessed an intimate knowledge of human nature.

After the exchange of the usual remarks about the weather and the congratulations of the caller upon the fine appearance of the young man, the former said :

“It was my intention, Mr. Winters, to see you earlier in the canvass, but I have had so much to do in the southern part of the State that I could not meet you sooner. I reached Oakdale this evening, and must leave to-morrow ; so I hired a horse and rode out here in the wet and darkness.”

“I am sorry you should have been put to so much inconvenience ; had I received word of your coming, I should have been glad to wait in town for you.”

“It is of no importance, — thank you ; I haven’t had much opportunity to look after our fences in this district, but am glad to hear you are making a good canvass, though there is such a natural majority against you that the prospect is not encouraging.”

“I agree with you.”

“However, there’s no telling what may happen ; well, Mr. Winters, without beating about the bush,

I may say that I am making a tour through the State just now to find out who are our friends."

There was no mistaking this "feeler," and Jim bowed his head.

"Now the question of politics, considered as politics, does not count with us; our friends are among both parties; how do *you* stand?"

"Colonel, I must ask you to be more explicit."

"You know that at every session of the legislature we are forced to ask for legislation of some kind; quite often we are attacked by hostile bills; there are always a number introduced that are 'strikers;' a dozen or more hangers-on are on the alert to push through legislation that we must either submit to or stave off, with the help of our friends. Simply because our company is rich, it is an object of indiscriminate and unjust attack. Unless, therefore, we know who our friends are among the members, we are liable to get left."

"I assume from what you say that you wish to learn whether you can count upon me, in the event of my election, to stand by your company in all matters of legislation which affect its interests?"

Colonel Kudger courteously inclined his head.

"Suppose your demands do not commend themselves to my judgment?"

"I may be permitted to say that the supposition is not supposable; we ask nothing except what is right."

"You mean from your standpoint, but you and I may view questions differently."

"Then you wish me to understand that you are our enemy?"

"I have said nothing of the kind."

"What, then, is your position?"

"That, if elected, I shall enter the legislature unpledged to any corporation, society, or individual, but true to the policy of the political platform upon which I was nominated; that I shall not surrender my right of private judgment, but that I shall be just, so far as I am able to be, to every interest with which I may have to do."

"Which is another way of saying you are against us."

"Have it as you please; when I think your company asks for what is right, I shall support its demands; when I think it is not right, I shall oppose with equal earnestness. I surrender my conscience to no man."

There was just the slightest sneer upon the hard face of the colonel as he said:

"I have heard that same sort of talk,—especially from the hayseed members."

"I am glad to know of their honesty."

"But it doesn't last; they are the first to come to us; they are *cheap*. Mr. Winters, how much money do you want to make this district sure for you?"

"Not a cent! I have not spent a dollar, and shall not. If you wish to use money to defeat me, don't lose an hour in doing so."

"I have seen Warnock; he's with us, tooth and nail," said the caller, significantly; "but we should prefer to have you in the legislature, because you have more brains and more weight; but we must be *sure* of you."

"I have already defined my position; you can offer me no inducement to pledge my vote and voice to your corporation unreservedly. Every question that comes up I shall examine without prejudice, and give my vote as my best judgment dictates."

Asking permission, the colonel lit a cigar, first offering one to Jim. Then this shrewd, cool, calculating man leaned back in his chair and smoked for three minutes, with his eyes upon the ceiling, and without uttering a word. Jim sat silent also, feeling that it was his caller's turn to speak.

Suddenly the colonel lowered his eyes and looked into the frank, attractive countenance before him. With a pleasing smile, he said, in a low, persuasive voice:

"Jim, I'm sure you're with us! *We want you*; you can't get through without our help; I've a little of the stuff with me," and he reached into the inner pocket of his coat.

"Don't!" interrupted Jim, with a protesting

wave of his hand, "there is no reason why there should be any misunderstanding, colonel, between us ; I cannot accept a dollar."

Colonel Kudger paused with his wallet half-drawn out.

"I offer it without any pledge on your part."

"Nevertheless, the pledge, if not given in words, is implied by my acceptance of your offer. I beg you to end the matter ; it is unpleasant to me."

The caller rose to his feet, shoved back the wallet, and buttoned his coat over it. With a meaning smile, he remarked, in a low voice, as if afraid that some one else in the house would hear him :

"He that is not with us is against us."

"I understand your meaning."

"Good night, Mr. Winters," added the visitor, extending his hand, which Jim took, and accompanied him to the door, where they parted.

"I suppose this ensures my defeat," was the conclusion of Jim, as he climbed the stairs and went to his room ; "but rather defeat with honour than victory with disgrace, as it would be to wear a collar around my neck and be compelled to do as some other man bade me. The money which Colonel Kudger offered to put into the canvass to help me will now be used to defeat me. Warnock has already spent several thousand dollars, and probably the first thing he did was to make a bid

for the support of the Quadmore Company. He is sure of success."

That such was the fact was proved some days later, when, close upon election day, Jim and Warnock met on the main street of Oakdale. They shook hands, and exchanged some pleasantries over the situation.

"I guess I'm going to down you, Jim, this time," said the radiant Warnock, whose breath tainted the air for a space of several feet.

"It looks that way."

"Sorry, but such, you know, is politics ; if there's anything I can do for you, Jim, after I'm sworn in, let me know."

"Thanks ; the first one to take you by the hand, in the event of your success and the opportunity offering, will be myself."

"I don't doubt it ; remember I'm your friend. I'm glad that this has been such a clean, manly canvass, — no personalities on either side, and neither of us spending a dollar."

Observing the quizzical smile on the face of Jim, Dick Warnock added, with every appearance of injured innocence :

"Honest Injin, I haven't put out a dollar, except, perhaps, to treat one or two friends, when I couldn't avoid it without appearing mean."

The campaign grew hotter toward the close. Jim spoke every week-day evening, and frequently

during the day. Warnock seemed not to sleep day or night ; the whole district was in a blaze of excitement.

When the returns were all in, it was found that Jim Winters had defeated his opponent by 482 votes,—a victory more overwhelming than the most ardent partisans of Jim had expected.

It is pretty safe to rely upon the sober, honest, second thought of the people, when the question of right and wrong is submitted to their judgment.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MAKING OF LAWS

"MY DEAR MR. WINTERS :— Permit me to be one of the hundreds of your friends to congratulate you upon the superb run you made in your district. You ought to feel proud of your success, and, being human, no doubt you do.

"In a canvass of this nature, there is of necessity considerable expense involved; I mean of a legitimate kind. I do not refer to the practice of buying votes, which none can condemn more emphatically than myself; but the speakers brought into the district, the printing, the renting of halls, the equipments of political organisations,—these and other matters entail a perfectly proper expense, of which the candidate must bear a part. Your circumstances are such that, pardon me for saying so, the tax to which you have been subjected must bear rather heavily. As a sincere well-wisher, I beg to enclose you my check for \$300, by way of a partial reimbursement therefor.

“Knowing your honourable sentiments as I do, I hasten to assure you that the acceptance of this moderate sum is not meant to constitute the basis of the slightest claim upon your support while a member of the honourable legislature. We expect you to follow your own judgment in every matter, as you declared to me it was your intention to do, and that in fact is all we ask of any member.

“With best wishes I am, my dear sir,

“Very truly,

“ZEPHANIAH KUDGER.”

“MY DEAR COLONEL:—Replying to your favour just received, I beg to say that, when I accepted my nomination for the legislature, I wrote my acceptance and enclosed it in an envelope which was directed to the *Bugle of Liberty*. As I was on the point of mailing it, a messenger from the *Bugle* office called for the letter, and I handed it to him, without removing the stamp that had been placed on the envelope and which cost me two cents.

“Recalling this grave oversight, some days later, I called at the *Bugle* office and made a claim upon Mr. Jenkins for the stamp. He disputed the claim; he informed me that, quick to detect the oversight, he had carefully soaked off the stamp and used it upon another letter, which he mailed

to a delinquent subscriber, and inasmuch as the subscriber had not paid up, he insisted that I ought to furnish him (Mr. Jenkins) with another stamp. After considering the matter, I resolutely refused, though we agreed that the dispute should not strain the relations between us.

"Since those two cents represent the entire expense to which I have been subjected in this campaign, I have made up my mind to stand the sacrifice like a man. I, therefore, return your check, with thanks, and beg to subscribe myself,

"Very truly,

"JAMES WINTERS."

Colonel Kudger smiled as he read this letter, and, filing it away as a curiosity, remarked to himself :

"Well, that fellow is a *rara avis*."

That winter was a busy one at the State capital. There was a great deal of legislation in which Jim Winters took a leading part. The reputation that had preceded him caused his appointment as chairman of several leading committees, and his influence was felt in nearly all of the measures that came before the law-making body. His associates speedily took his measure, and, after one or two weak attempts to approach him by lobbyists, he was rarely troubled. It became known to all that nothing which would not bear the light of the

noonday sun could receive his support. Not only that, but he was sure to be its uncompromising enemy. More than one corrupt measure received its quietus from his unsparing opposition.

“Say, Winters, do you ever play poker?”

The question was asked by a fellow member, just after adjournment, and during the bustle of preparation for leaving the Assembly chamber. Jim looked at the questioner, and recognised him as Mr. Blifffkins, a raw-boned, gawky countryman, whose voice had never been heard in the house during business hours except to vote. His naturally sandy whiskers were dyed a greenish, metallic black, while his hair and eyebrows were of a flaxen colour, the eyes themselves being of grayish hue. How strange that some men do not recognise that nature is the wisest painter of the hair and beard.

Mr. Blifffkins had a retreating forehead and chin, an enormous nose, the skin of which still betrayed the peeling it had received from the sun while he was following the furrow. He was a man below ordinary ability, and one whose appearance in a law-making body suggests the question whether he ever would have been sent thither, had he lacked money, or refused to sell himself to some corporation that purchased his election for him.

“Do I ever play poker?” repeated the aston-

ished Jim; "no; I never saw a game of it in my life, and do not know one card from another."

"Gosh! it's fun; you oughter larn it."

"Are you a player?"

"I wasn't till last night; Colonel Kudger teached me; I played till after midnight; haven't sot up so late since I used to court my wife; say, Winters, don't tell nobody that I'm gittin' gay," and Mr. Blifffkins chuckled and jammed his thumb into the ribs of Jim several times, as if it were all very funny.

"Did you play for money?"

"Course; that's the best part of it."

"How did you come out?"

"Say!"

Mr. Blifffkins took hold of the lapel of Jim's coat and pulled his head down so as to bring his ear close to the countryman's mouth. The whisper that followed could be heard farther than an ordinary conversational tone:

"I won two thousand dollars!"

"And you never played the game before?"

"Never, but it's as easy as rolling off a lorg."

"That accounts for your vote being in favour of every measure of the Quadmore Company."

"Wal, now, after beating the colonel so bad, and he a-askin' me as a favour to support one or two bills, why wouldn't I be consarned mean not

to do it? Wouldn't *you* do it, Winters, if you was in my place?"

"Yes; if I won two thousand dollars from Colonel Kudger, I should consider that I had sold myself body and soul to him. When you go back home, don't fail to let all your friends and neighbours know of your skill and good luck at poker."

"Good gracious! I wouldn't have 'em know it fur the world."

"Why not?"

"Every one of 'em would want a chance to try their luck, and I'd be knocked sky-high when it come time for the next nomination."

"As you deserve to be; Blifffkins, I don't know whether you are a fool or a rascal; I incline to think you are both. You deserve to be expelled from the legislature for accepting a bribe, for it is nothing else."

"But some other members have done the same!" exclaimed the frightened honourable gentleman, as if that fact made his action right.

"I'm sorry to know we have corrupt men among us; but what induced you to come to *me* with the question whether I play poker?"

Blifffkins again seized the lapel of Jim's coat and pulled his ear down, while he whispered in tones that were audible twenty feet away:

"If you'll set in a game, you'll win two thousand

dollars, too ; I know what I'm talking about, and I'll get a fee— ”

At that instant Mr. Blifffkins caught sight of Colonel Kudger standing a few paces off, apparently talking with one of his tools, but watching Blifffkins. He scowled and shook his head so angrily at the country member, that the latter did not finish his sentence in Jim's ear, but hurried between the desks to find out what orders his master had for him.

Toward the close of the session, a tremendous fight opened in the legislature. The struggle deserved that name, for it was between two enormously wealthy corporations, the Quadmore Railway Company, and the “Q. & X.,” as it was familiarly called, another railway organisation that was a powerful rival of the Quadmore. The latter applied for a charter to allow it to lay tracks through a certain section of the State, while the Q. & X. opposed for a number of ingenious reasons set forth, the real one being that the project would interfere with certain schemes of its own.

It is such contests that try the legislators as by fire. Vast sums of money are employed to buy votes, and the pestilent lobbyists reap rich harvests. Had the fight been between a powerful and a weak organisation, there could be no doubt of the outcome, but it was a battle between giants.

Cautious advances were made to Jim Winters

from both sides, but they were checked at the start, and he was pestered no further. He was not a member of the Committee on Corporations, and no one could say with certainty how he would vote. He listened closely to the arguments, asked the respective champions incisive questions, and consulted with Judge Whiteley when he returned to his home at the close of each week. He determined to be informed fully when the bill came up for final decision.

It seemed to be the fate of the young member to decide many questions, as it had fallen to him to settle disputes from boyhood between his friends. His name was the last on the roll-call, because it was so near the end of the alphabet. The bill to which reference has been made passed the Senate by a fair margin and went through the second reading in the Assembly with comparatively little opposition. The real struggle was on the third reading or final passage.

The excitement was intense. Few members were allowed to sleep for the two or three nights preceding the final vote. Champagne flowed like water, and thousands of dollars were placed where they were likely to "do the most good." The lobbyists had seats on the floor of the House, back of the members, where they kept tally, as the vote was called, and unblushingly slipped up behind the legislators to whisper their orders in their ears.

Singular as it may seem, the vote was exactly even when it reached the last name on the roll, that of Jim Winters. Again it fell to him to decide the question. Hardly a member cast his vote without "explaining" it. He who was the loudest in his professions of honesty, who thought only of the interests of the State, who cared not the snap of his finger for the two corporations concerned, might safely be set down as one of the members who had in his pocket a big fee from the company for whom he cast his vote.

"Mr. Speaker," said Jim Winters, rising in his seat, amid the oppressive hush, as his name was called, "it has been the policy of our State from the first to foster legitimate railway enterprise within its borders, for no one needs to be told that it is one of the most potent means of development that civilisation possesses. The Quadmore Company asks for the right to lay down its tracks through an undeveloped section of our State; it is ready to comply with every legal requirement; it pays a large tax to the State every year, and its request is reasonable. That request is opposed by the Q. & X. Railway Company, under the plea that the work is not needed. Inasmuch as the new line must interfere to some extent with the traffic and business of the Q. & X., it is to be expected that it will oppose this charter. But, Mr. Speaker, we have nothing to do with that; the

new line has been petitioned for by the majority of residents of the section through which it will pass and whom it will benefit. We have no right to turn a deaf ear to those requests. I vote ay."

A good many men were surprised to hear this vote, and none more so than Colonel Kudger himself. He had put down the name of Winters as certain to vote against the bill, and with gnawing chagrin he saw certain defeat before him, but lo! victory came at the last moment.

I repeat that a good many were surprised by the vote of Jim Winters, for among many unreasoning people there was such bitter prejudice against the Quadmore Company, which had unquestionably done much to corrupt legislation, that the simplest measure in which it was interested was looked upon with distrust, and the man who attempted to show it fair play was denounced as a tool of the company, whose soul was not his own, and who simply did as he was ordered to do.

There were one or two whispers like this against Jim, but they were soon hushed, and so universal was the faith in his integrity that the men whom he defeated by his vote uttered not a word of condemnation. In truth, his position was so fair that no one could gainsay his arguments.

"Now, colonel, I don't want any thanks," said Jim, when, after adjournment, the smiling chief

of lobbyists gave him a military salute as he approached.

"Nevertheless, I thank you."

"You needn't, for when your company takes the position of the Q. & X., I shall vote against it."

"Therefore, Duke Winters, I thank thee, and dost thou not recall what I said in thine ear, that the Knights of Quadmore ask only that which is right?"

"It happens that such is their position in this instance, but it has not always been thus, nor is it likely to be so in the future."

Late that evening a knock sounded on the door of Jim's room at the hotel. "Come," he called, and, after some fumbling at the knob, the door was shoved inward, and Mr. Blifkins, with his jet-black fringe of whiskers under his chin, and his milky eyes, thrust his head through, still grasping the knob, and refusing to enter at the invitation of Jim.

"I jist called, Winters, to tell you that you're the biggest fool in the country."

"Why?"

"You woted fur the Quadmore Company to-day, didn't you?"

"To the best of my knowledge and recollection I did."

"Wal, if you'd held off, I could've got you five

thousand dollars fur that wote ; you'd've woted as your conscience dictatered, and had the money beside, and I'd've asked only one thousand of it. What fools some folks be, and don't know it ! " and, with a deep sigh, Mr. Blifffkins drew the door shut and moved off.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JIM'S SECOND TERM

THE renomination of Jim Winters followed as a matter of course. No other name was submitted to the convention, and when a committee brought him to the hall to accept the honour, he was received with the most ardent expressions of favour. In reply, after thanking them, he assured his friends, that, if elected, he would be guided by the same principles that had governed him before. While recognising his political obligations, his efforts would be devoted to what he conceived to be the true interests of his district and the State at large.

"That is my platform," he added ; "I shall use every honourable effort to win, and when I return among you shall be certain that I have not lost my self-respect, and I trust shall retain the respect of yourselves."

The opposing nomination was offered to Dick Warnock, and he was assured that he was certain to wipe out overwhelmingly his defeat of the preceding year, but he would have none of it.

"I told them 'not much,'" he said, the following day to Jim. "I have found out how I stand in my own district, and that's enough; one slaughter such as I received will do; besides, the old gentleman says it's too expensive a luxury. I've half a mind to vote for you myself, Jim; we might as well make it unanimous."

Nevertheless, an opponent was nominated against Winters, but he had no hope of winning, and, as Dick Warnock remarked, only a few people knew that he was actually running.

A pleasing proof of Jim Winters's popularity was given when, without any wire-pulling of his own, he was elected Speaker of the House.

The leading members of the Quadmore Railway Company telegraphed to Colonel Kudger, when they learned what the action of the caucus would be.

"You must arrange the appointment of the committees with Winters; you must see that they are made up so that it will be safe for us; everything depends on *that*."

"It is an easy thing to fix, colonel," said another high officer; "we shall depend upon you to arrange it, for we are bound to have another fight with the Q. & X."

Colonel Kudger waited till they were all through, and then quietly asked:

"Have I not always served you faithfully?"

"There is no question as to that; none could have done better."

"When I have offered advice it has generally been pretty sound?"

"Your judgment has been vindicated in nearly every instance."

"Well, now, I have just three words of counsel to give regarding Jim Winters, as his friends call him."

The officers looked curiously at their great lobbyist, who slowly rose to his feet, took his cigar from between his lips, raised his forefinger, and with a face of preternatural solemnity, checked off each word in a dramatic voice and with his most impressive manner:

"Let him alone."

Colonel Kudger acted upon his own advice.

"I've taken that man's measure," he explained to the president of the Quadmore Railway Company; "it's a waste of nervous energy to attempt to move him."

"It is a strange statement to make about any man, but we shall leave the question in your hands."

Now, it was a striking commentary upon the peculiarities of legislation that precisely the same situation that had confronted the legislature during Jim's first term confronted it again during his second term, with the important exception that

the positions of the two great rival railways were reversed. The Quadmore had secured its charter, and its men wrought with such energy that, when the legislature reconvened, the new road was running. Seeing a prospective loss, the Q. & X. applied for a charter to extend a branch in another part of the State, which, if granted, was sure to interfere with the business of the Quadmore Company, which already had a line extending through that section. The legislative fight was as bitter and determined as before.

It would have been amusing, if not so pitiful, in a certain sense, to observe the promptness with which the former supporters of "legitimate enterprise" and the "development of the State" now changed front, and laboured to show, through the adroit arguments furnished them by the attorneys and agents of the Quadmore Company, that the proposed charter would be a blow to the best interests of the commonwealth; that the new line was not needed, and that to grant it a charter would be a serious injury to the corporation that had already paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxes to the State. As one member expressed it, it would be "base ingratitude," and a crime the equal of Benedict Arnold's.

The Quadmore corporation meant to win. It was known that it owned the Senate, and it was generally believed that a majority of the House

were it servants. Speaker Jim Winters saw how the tide was going, and that unless it was stemmed a gross injustice would prevail. Calling one of the members to the chair, while the debate was in progress, he made the most powerful speech of the session. He showed the glaring inconsistency of the legislators who had supported the measure of the year previous and now opposed another of precisely the same import. The principle involved was exactly the same, and the honourable gentlemen would stultify themselves by following the line that had been indicated.

The speech was in unexceptionable taste. He knew of the money that had been distributed among some of the members; he knew that men had been sold to the highest bidder; that some of them had declared that their votes should go where they would bring the best returns; that they were not in the legislature, as one of them put it, "for their health," but for what was in it.

Jim knew all this and much more, for a good many members had made him their confidant, but his references were of that nature that they offended no one and he betrayed the trust of none. He made no charges of corruption, but when he raised his hand above his head, and, facing about, demanded what explanation these honourable gentlemen would make to their constituents, when called to account for their votes, and, more impor-

tant than all, what reply would they make to the questions of conscience, of manhood, of honour, — when Jim said all this, the hush was so profound that the ticking of the clock behind his desk was plainly audible throughout the chamber.

“As for me, I *dare not* vote any other way than in favour of the measure.”

The grand triumph of this appeal was that, beyond question, it utterly overthrew the opposition to the bill. Colonel Kudger had fixed his men before the final vote, for there was no doubt in his mind where the Speaker would be found, and he was taking no chances.

But for the speech of Winters, the bill would have been defeated by five votes, but his impassioned outburst actually shamed seven members, each of whom had a fat fee in his pocket from the colonel, to change their votes before the total was announced, and thus it came about that the measure was defeated and right prevailed.

“Now, if you choose, colonel, you may thank me,” remarked Jim, after adjournment, as the great lobbyist, with another military salute and the same smile as of old, advanced and offered his hand.

“If I cannot thank you,” said the colonel, warmly pressing his palm, and lowering his voice, with a furtive glance over his shoulder, to make sure he was not overheard, “I can say that I

respect you, for you are the noblest work of God,
—*an honest man!*"

And now turn to this picture :

It was one of the members who was shamed into changing his vote by the appeal of the Speaker, who kept out of the way of Colonel Kudger until the latter pinned him in a corner.

"I hardly knew what I was doing," said the honourable gentleman, "but he actually scared me. Good gracious! how would I explain matters to my people? What should I say to my wife and to our preacher when they asked me why I didn't vote the same as I did last year? I can't stand it, colonel; it makes me shiver now when I think what a narrow escape I had."

"Just so, but what about that thousand dollars you took last night for the pledge of your support and for which I hold your receipt?"

"I'd like to pay that back if I could, but the truth is," added the other, nervously, "I haven't got it just now."

"How long will it take you to return it?" was the cold question of the lobbyist. The member made a weak attempt to smile.

"I say, what difference does it make to you, colonel? It doesn't come out of *your* pocket; the company is rich and can stand it."

"That has nothing to do with the question; I shall give you twenty-four hours in which to give

back the money ; if it has not reached me by that time, I shall place your receipt in the hands of Speaker Winters and see that it is brought before the House ; you know that your expulsion will follow ; good day."

Now, if the honourable gentleman had been cunning, he would not have been scared by this threat ; for Colonel Kudger was as deep in the mud as the other was in the mire, and exposure would have been as fatal in one case as in the other. But conscience makes cowards of us all. The result was that the bribe was returned to the colonel within the time specified. He took his revenge by reminding his servile tool that if he had held fast to the money, he could not have been harmed, for the reasons already set forth. It is safe to assume that the meditations of the man were of anything but a pleasant nature.

At the close of the session, Speaker Winters was presented with a handsome set of silver, in token of the esteem of his fellow members. The warmest of the numerous commendatory speeches came from the minority, who gladly gave testimony to the impartiality of the presiding officer and his strict fairness to all. The contributors to the testimonial included every member of the Assembly without exception.

As the following summer drew to a close, there was a general demand that Jim Winters should

become the candidate of his party for the State Senate, where the term was for three years, but he informed his friends that he had decided to leave politics, and he could not, therefore, accept the nomination. Then a general move was made to send him to Congress, but he declined, for reasons that will presently appear.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SEED AND FRUIT

THE principal reason why Jim Winters refused to continue in politics was because he couldn't afford it. The pay of a legislator was five hundred dollars for the session, which lasted about three months. Since a man, governed as he was by strict principle, could not earn an extra dollar, and was compelled to neglect important matters connected with his profession, his loss was not in the present alone, but in the future, for his conscientiousness would not permit him to slight any of his legislative duties, and to give them the attention they demanded, allowed little time for anything else.

It has been stated that, after his admission to the bar, Jim Winters was made a partner of the eminent Judge Whiteley. It need hardly be explained that, at the time this partnership was formed, the judge was not on the bench, for, had he been, he would not have been practising law. He had served two terms with great credit and

acceptability when he resigned, in order to take up his more lucrative profession. Naturally the honourable title clung to him, and he was universally spoken of as "Judge Whiteley."

During Jim Winters's second term as a member of the legislature, the governor of the State nominated the judge as one of the vice-chancellors, the nomination being confirmed by the Senate. This furnished a fair salary and again took him out of the practice of law, while Jim was left in charge of the office, with two students as his assistants.

The comparatively brief association with the judge had been of great help to Jim. Many important cases came to the former while practising, and he drew freely upon the energy, the ability, and the natural aptitude of his junior partner. Some of the matters submitted were of so intricate a nature, that Jim would have shrunk from handling them, had he not known that the invaluable counsel of the venerable jurist was at his command. His luminous learning made the dark places light and helped Jim to win many a legal battle, in which he felt that the credit really belonged to the able man who took so much pleasure in putting him forward to gather the laurels that had lost their attraction to the one who was beginning to bow beneath the weight of years.

"Come to me just as freely as you have done in the past," said the new vice-chancellor; "any advice or help that I can give is always at your command."

Knowing that this was sincere, Jim accepted the offer. He followed one commendable rule: he never went to the judge (as he was still called), until he had first done everything in his power to shape matters and complete his case, as he believed it ought to be. He then made known what he had done and asked for the judge's criticism.

"I do not see how you could have done better," was the general response, though occasionally he made a valuable suggestion; "and, since I am growing old, I think I shall begin to lean on you."

"Lean as heavily as you can, for it will give me more pleasure than you," was the hearty response of Jim, delighted to find that the judge took him at his word. The result was that the benefit was mutual. It was a laborious matter for the elder to write out his opinions, and, in most cases, he could not afford to run the risk of those opinions becoming known before he read them in court. Some of his decisions were of the most important character, involving not thousands but millions of dollars, in which a few days' anticipation of his dictum could be turned to enormous profit by unscrupulous persons.

Jim Winters volunteered to write the opinions at the dictation of the vice-chancellor, who was happy to accept the offer, especially as the young man possessed a peculiar facility of expression and an excellent style which not infrequently proved of help even to one as learned in the law as Judge Whiteley. The arrangement was highly acceptable to him, for, in addition to the reasons named, he knew that Jim Winters could be trusted without reservation. Thus it came about that the young man often carried secrets which he could have sold for a fortune.

One summer afternoon, there came a timid knock on the door of the inner office of Jim Winters. In response to his call to enter, the door was pushed gently open, and a girl, poorly clad, looked in, hesitating to advance farther.

"Come in, Maggie," said the lawyer, kindly; "I am glad to see you; take a seat."

She sat down on the edge of a chair near the door, embarrassed and ill at ease. She was Maggie Sullivan, seventeen years old, and the eldest daughter of Widow Sullivan, who had a large family to look after.

"How is your mother to-day, Maggie?" inquired Jim, in the same sympathetic voice.

"She is not very well; she has been very poor since the death of little Mike," and the girl wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"And how are the rest of your brothers and sisters?"

"They are pretty well, thank you," replied the girl, rapidly recovering her self-possession under the kind reception of the young man. "I don't know what we should have done, Mr. Winters, if it hadn't been for ye and your mither."

"I believe mother called at your home yesterday?"

"God bless the good woman; she has been there every week, and sometimes oftener since little Mike's funeral; she always laves us some food or clothing, and sometimes something to help pay the rint; ah, Mr. Winters, ye have a good father and mither."

"Yes; I have, Maggie, and I am thankful for it."

"And there be no bitter young men than yersilf, Mr. Winters. Sure, it is everybody that has some good word to say for ye."

"Now, Maggie, don't flatter me or you'll make me feel proud," replied Jim, with a laugh, which removed the last feeling of timidity on the part of his caller.

"It's a right ye have to feel proud; wasn't it yersilf that paid every cint of the cost of little Mike's funeral, and didn't ye make me promise not to tell anybody, and isn't it hard wurruk for me to keep my lips mute, whin I hear others spaaking of ye?"

"And what can I do for you to-day? Speak freely, Maggie."

"Ah's me, I'm in sore throuble. Ye know I hired out to Mr. Bolus at the beginning of the year; he promised to give me eight dollars a month, if I stayed wid him till the end of the year; I served him faithfully for four months, and then little Mike's sickness took me home; mither not being well, I can't lave her."

"Of course not; your duty is with her."

"And Mr. Bolus—bad cess to him!—will not give me a cint of me wages, 'cause he says the agraament was that I was to have nothing if I did not stay the year out."

"Have you asked him for the money?"

"Have I asked him? If I have begged him once I've begged him a dozen times, and mither has been to him, but little good it does; he says he will stick to the agraament and I shall not have a penny. I have called, Mr. Winters, to ask ye whether ye can't make him pay me for the four months I was wid him; I'll give ye one-half of the money, if ye'll get it for me."

"I think I can get it for you, but I shall not allow you to pay me anything."

"God bless ye! it's just like yersilf."

"I am so sure of getting all that is coming to you, Maggie," said Jim, buoyantly, "that I'll advance you a part of your wages. Suppose I hand

you one-half — that is sixteen dollars — and I will give you the rest after I've had a talk with Mr. Bolus."

Had the honest girl known the chances the lawyer was taking in this business she never would have accepted the money, but, when she called to ask Jim to sue the rich man, she believed anything that mortal man could do would be an easy thing for him to accomplish. So she took the money and, with a light heart, bade her friend good morning.

Jim Winters dropped a friendly note to Deacon Bolus, asking him to be good enough to call upon him on a little business matter as soon as he found it convenient to do so. Sooner than Jim expected, the stern old farmer (who never knew of the plot, years before, against the choicest watermelon in his patch) entered the office of the lawyer, with a demand to know why he had been sent for.

Jim had braced himself for what he knew would be a trying interview, and was determined that nothing that could be said by the elderly man should ruffle his temper. He saw that the deacon had a suspicion of the nature of the business, and was in anything but an amiable mood.

"Deacon," said Jim, "Maggie Sullivan came to see me yesterday — "

"About working for me, I s'pose; well, what of it?"

"I believe she was with you for four months?"

"Yes, when she agreed to stay a year or receive nothing in the way of pay."

"She was a faithful servant, so long as she was with you, was she not?"

"Oh, she did well enough, I s'pose; my wife and me was satisfied."

"As a man of business, deacon, you know that the law will compel you to pay Maggie for the four months she was in your employ."

"I should like to know how you make that out when I have her name signed to an agreement that she wasn't to have any wages until she had served a year. I've got the paper in my pocket and will show it to you."

"It isn't necessary; your word is sufficient, and Maggie does not deny it; it is precisely as you say."

"Then what are you talking about? You lawyers ain't so smart as you think; I'm an honest man and stick by what I say; my word's as good as my bond."

"No one has ever doubted that, but don't you think, deacon, that this girl, the eldest daughter of a poor widow with a large family, is entitled to pay for the time that she rendered you faithful service?"

"No, I don't; 'cause she signed the agreement with her eyes open. I didn't take any advantage of

her, but read every word out loud first, and she made no objection."

"Her expectation was to stay with you the full year, and she would have done so had not the death of her brother and the failing health of her mother made it necessary for her to remain at home."

"I've nothing to do with *that*; that's her misfortune."

"It was, indeed, but you do not forget that Maggie is a minor, and the paper which she signed would have no weight in court; the judge would throw it out and compel you to pay her mother the full amount with the costs of the suit."

Strange that this phase of the matter had never occurred to the deacon, who had the reputation of being one of the keenest men in the community in business affairs. He saw his mistake, and his face flushed with anger. Before he could give shape to the indignant words that were forming on his lips, Jim Winters said, gently:

"All the same, deacon, I shall not sue you; I hold you in too high esteem to bring you into court and hear your neighbours censure you for your harshness—"

"Let 'em censure! I don't care; I'll never pay—"

"Your feelings are somewhat stirred now, deacon, but I know that when you come to think

over the matter, you will be glad to bring a little sunshine into that darkened home, by paying Maggie not for the year, but for the four months that she rendered you honest service. When she came here yesterday in tears, I assured her that she would receive every cent due her; indeed, I was so sure of it that I advanced her half of the amount and will give her the remainder the next time I see her — ”

“ Well, if that doesn’t beat everything! ” the deacon fairly gasped; “ young man, you may whistle — ”

“ Poor girl! she will be happy when she hears of this; the family would have starved but for the kindness of their neighbours; just drop in there, deacon, on your way home; it will touch your heart and do you good to see the gratitude of those people for your kindness.”

“ But — but — but — ”

“ I think that after doing a charitable deed of this kind, a man is entitled to the pleasure that comes with seeing the happiness it has accomplished. Don’t fail to call there; you can hand the money to them yourself; that will be better than for it to pass through my hands. You don’t realise what pleasure is awaiting you.”

Jim Winters now gave his caller a chance to say a word, but when the opportunity came he was mute. It would be hard to name the emotions

that were struggling within the deacon. Among them were probably pride, resentment, and anger, as against the better promptings of his nature. Charity, kindness, sympathy for suffering humanity, or, in other words, the true, sweet spirit of Christianity, that had slumbered so long, were awokened into life and pleading that they might be heeded.

And in the end, the good angel that is at every man's elbow prevailed. Rising to his feet with a deep sigh, the deacon buttoned his coat closely around him, though the day was one of the mildest of the season.

"I'll drop in at the widow's on my way home, Jim, and look into things for myself," he remarked, in his off-hand manner, as if the matter was of no importance, when, in truth, the fountains of the great deep had been broken up, and his whole nature was stirred as never before.

"That's the thing to do, deacon; after you have investigated, then do what you believe to be right. Good-bye."

Never had Jim Winters received a more crushing pressure of his hand than that which the deacon gave him. It made him wince, and, though he was not absolutely certain, he suspected that he saw more than the usual moisture in the eyes of the honest, but hard-hearted, man.

"What do ye think?" gasped Maggie Sullivan

the next day, as she burst into the office of Jim Winters without pausing to knock.

"Gracious! Maggie, do you want to startle me out of my wits? How can I think of anything when you pounce down on me like that?"

"Mr. Bolus come to our house the afternoon of yest'day. My! he scared us at first, for he was harsh, and said he meant to find out how things was wid us; he kept talking sharp, and asking questions loud like, till I was ready to cry and run out of the house, but it was thin he turned into another man. I didn't 'spicion anything, though he kept blowing his nose in his big red kerchief, but bime by I obsarved that it was his eyes that was troubling him, and not his nose. Would ye belave it, he was crying, was the same? Thin he took out his big pocketbook, that is always bulging wid money, and counted out — what do ye think?"

"I suppose the sixteen dollars that he owed you," laughed Jim.

"Sixteen dollars!" repeated Maggie, with fine scorn; "he never stopped counting till he had laid ninety-six dollars in the lap of me mither, who was spaachless. 'There!' says he, 'ye are entitled to it, for ye would have stayed a year if ye could.' I reminded him that yersilf had given me sixteen dollars, so that, by his own figgerin', he didn't owe so much to us, but he said, almost

cross-like, that yersilf hadn't any bus'ness to be interfering wid his affairs, and it would sarve ye right if ye didn't git a cint of it back ; and then the spalpeen winked at me, which, I take it, was a suggestion that I shouldn't give it back to ye, Mr. Winters, but I couldn't be that ongrateful, and I have brought it to ye, and here it is."

"Now, my good girl, put that right back in your pocket, and, if you want to keep me as your friend, never refer to it again."

"Worra, worra !" exclaimed Maggie, bewildered and partly dazed by the astonishing experience of the last few days ; "me head is in a whurrl ; I'll hurry home before it is upsit entirely."

When alone once more in his office, Jim Winters mused :

"Now, who is the happiest, Maggie and her mother, Deacon Bolus, or myself ? I don't see how my feelings can be more pleasant, for I know I have been able to accomplish some good, not to one, but to several persons ; yet, as Maggie expressed it, I am in a whirl.

"And yet," he added, after a few minutes' further thought, "I suspect that the most profound pleasure is that of Deacon Bolus, for better nature has been stirred into life, and *that* gives any one genuine happiness."

CHAPTER XXIX.

TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR THE WINK OF AN EYE

ALL through that summer Vice-chancellor Whiteley was engaged in hearing one of the most important cases that had ever been brought into the courts of his State. It would be more proper, perhaps, to say that it involved a larger amount of money than had been imperilled for years.

A vast trust, with a capital amounting to ten million dollars, had been organised under the liberal laws of the State, and had been doing business for some time in an adjoining State, which contained its principal offices. In order to secure its charter, certain technical requirements had been complied with, and for awhile its status and position were not assailed.

Finally, however, a wealthy corporation, engaged in the same business, brought suit to annul the charter of the trust, on the ground that it had not complied with the laws of the

State which granted the charter. The attorney-general and a number of eminent counsel acted for the corporation that brought the suit, while the legal gentlemen arrayed on the other side included some of the most distinguished lawyers in the country. The hearing attracted national attention, for immense interests were involved, and the decision must of necessity have an important bearing on similar corporations in other States. Finally, the hearings came to an end.

Following several weeks' study, Judge Whiteley (as he was still generally known) began the writing of his opinion. While thus engaged, he had the constant assistance of Jim Winters, to whom the work was a pleasure. None liked more than he to follow the intricate windings of the arguments on both sides, the labyrinth of authorities and the crystalline reasoning of the vice-chancellor, as he picked his way through the maze to his decision, which was a masterpiece of lucidity and learning. Such study was beneficial to the young lawyer, whose own ideas expanded and grew under the crucial tuition.

When the whole elaborate decision had been taken down, revised, and pronounced satisfactory by the venerable jurist, Jim set out to copy it in his large, round hand, that was as legible as copper-plate. The judge had often complimented his young friend upon his expertness in penman-

ship, which he pronounced as easy to read as print, and ten times more legible than his own script. It may be said that the careful writing out of the decision was instructive of itself to Jim, who found the arguments more firmly imbedded in his mind by the process.

This work involving so much care was completed late one spring afternoon. When Jim was tardy in reaching his home, his parents knew it was due to the pressure of business, and therefore felt no anxiety. He carefully compared the transcript with the original, and knowing it was correct to a letter, folded up the document and shoved it into one of the pigeon-holes of his desk, intending to lock it in the safe until he could personally hand it to the judge.

His assistants had gone home and he was in the act of rising from his desk, when some one tapped on his door.

"Come in!" called Jim, wheeling his chair about so as to face the entrance.

It was a stranger who entered, — a tall, spare man, dressed in a brown business suit, with clean-shaven face, an alert eye, and in middle life. He spoke briskly, hesitating in the doorway.

"Is this Mr. James Winters?"

"That is my name."

"Are we alone?" asked the caller, glancing like a ferret around the room.

"Wholly so, and I will secure us against interruption," with which Jim arose and turned the key in the door behind his visitor.

"Thanks," said the latter, in a low, soft voice, producing his card, glancing at which Jim read the name, "Jared Y. Vernon." Throwing the bit of pasteboard on the desk in front of him, he again faced about and waited for his caller to make known his business.

Mr. Vernon kept his glove on his left hand, which grasped his derby, while he held his other glove in his right hand and used it to switch with and to give point to the words that came from his lips.

Mr. Vernon's manner was peculiar and not altogether pleasant. He hitched his chair close to that of Jim, and then leaned forward on its two front legs, so as to bring his face quite near to that of the young lawyer. Had some one standing behind Mr. Vernon given a gentle backward hitch to his chair, the visitor would have sat down with prompt emphasis on the carpet. Moreover, he spoke with a low, insinuating voice that, under some circumstances, doubtless, was very effective.

His first question was a stunner, and put Jim on his guard.

"Wouldn't you like to make twenty thousand dollars?"

"I should."

"Well, I have called to tell you how you can do it."

"I am listening."

"You can make it, too, without moving from your chair."

"I have heard of alchemy," laughed Jim, "but this beats that."

"I'll prove it."

"I repeat that I am listening."

"I represent a syndicate that controls hundreds of thousands."

"I congratulate you and the syndicate."

"Do you want the proof?"

"I'm not interested enough to care to see the proof; I'll accept your statement."

"We are prepared to give you twenty thousand dollars."

"Don't let your modesty restrain you," replied Jim, entering into the spirit of the queer proceedings.

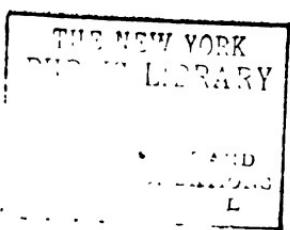
"Of course," added Mr. Vernon, with an oily smile, "this is not intended as a gift, pure and simple."

"Why then raise my hopes, only to dash them to the earth again?"

"I do not dash them; the money is yours for a little simple information: do you know the decision of Chancellor Whiteley on the great trust case that has been before him for several months?"



“WE ARE PREPARED TO GIVE YOU TWENTY THOUSAND
DOLLARS.”



By way of answer, Jim reached into the pigeon-hole and drew out the document which he had placed there within the last fifteen minutes.

"There it is; I had just finished copying it when you came in."

The keen gray eyes of Mr. Vernon sparkled, and, dropping the glove loosely grasped in his right hand, he impulsively extended his itching fingers.

"Let me look at it," he said, forgetting his coolness in his eager cupidity.

"Hardly," replied Jim, shoving it back into its resting-place.

"I beg pardon; I forgot myself, and it is proper that you should refuse my request until assured of your *quid pro quo*."

"Assuredly so."

"I am prepared to pay you twenty thousand dollars for the favour of reading, not the whole opinion of Chancellor Whiteley, but the decision which he reaches at the end."

Jim looked at his caller without speaking and with his face devoid of all expression. Mr. Vernon felt that something in the nature of an explanation was due.

"It is a singular request, but reflection will convince you that it is perfectly proper. Are you listening?"

"That is my present occupation."

"Now, you will admit that Wall Street is the greatest gambling centre in the country."

"I have heard that charge."

"Of course," commented Mr. Vernon, who was again switching his glove; "it is simply a strife as to who shall get the better of the other. There is no fairness or honesty in its dealings."

"I have thought otherwise; there may be a good deal of what you charge, but the speculation after all is legitimate, and no man or set of men are more observant of their word and obligations than those to whom you refer."

"You are right to a certain extent, but if a man can get an advantage over another in Wall Street, he is pretty sure to improve it."

"That trait of human nature is hardly confined to Wall Street."

"You see what I'm driving at; the decision of Chancellor Whiteley will produce a strong effect upon the stock of this syndicate; he will probably make his decision known within a week."

"Such is his intention."

"If we can get the tip just now, don't you see what a good thing it will be for us?"

"I do, and what a bad thing it will be for the other fellows."

"You and me will make a nice pile and divvy; the chancellor will suspect nothing, and I and my friends will be able to recoup some of the

losses we have lately suffered. What do you say?"

"Are you prepared to hand the twenty thousand dollars to me now?"

"I am; I will give it to you this minute on your promise to let me look through the opinion of Chancellor Whiteley," and Mr. Vernon made a preliminary gesture toward his inner coat pocket.

"I cannot consent that the paper shall go out of my custody even for that brief interval."

"I cannot steal it, for you are here to prevent me. What's your objection?"

Jim glanced at the edge of the paper, which lay by itself in one of the pigeon-holes, and shook his head. Mr. Vernon did not mean to let the golden opportunity slip through his fingers.

"Very well; I will be satisfied if you will give me the decision in your own words."

"How can you know that I speak truthfully?"

"I'll take chances on that; from what I have heard of you, I believe you would not deceive me."

There was no pleasure imparted by this compliment, for it was more than offset by the supposition of the caller that the young man would be a party to the greatest conceivable deception.

Seeing that Jim still hesitated, as if his mind were not fully made up, Mr. Vernon became more persistent.

"You do not feel quite clear as to your duty.

I respect your scruples about allowing the paper to pass out of your hands, even for a few minutes ; therefore, I do not ask it. You hesitate to express in words the decision reached by the chancellor ; I will relieve you of that necessity."

"How?"

"If the chancellor has decided *against* the trust, wink your right eye ; if *in its favour*, wink your left eye. It means twenty thousand dollars."

Jared Y. Vernon looked intently into the face of Jim Winters, who, without the slightest change of countenance, winked — both eyes.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN APPLE OF GOLD IN A PICTURE OF SILVER

AT the moment of making this extraordinary reply to the offer of his caller, Jim Winters cast one quick, furtive glance at the document lying in his desk. Mr. Vernon rose to his feet. He was sure that he understood the meaning of that lightning-like telegraphy, and he was satisfied.

"All right; no man ever regretted trusting me, and you never shall," he said, rising to his feet and drawing on the single glove. "I congratulate you on the snug little fortune that will be yours to-morrow. Good day, and many thanks for the common sense you have shown."

It was fully dark when Jim Winters was prepared to set out for home. Before doing so, he did several singular things. Among them was that of sliding the curved washboard-like cover of his roller desk well down, but not far enough for the lock to catch, nor did he lock the door leading to his inner office. The outer, or street door, as a matter of course was fastened, though the watchman who passed up and down in front

of the building at certain hours of the night was relied upon to guard against burglars.

For several hours after the departure of Jim, nothing unusual was to be observed near his office. Since it was on one of the main streets of Oakdale, people were continually passing back and forth, though there was nothing to attract their attention. The single gas-jet was turned down to a point, which shed only the dimmest glimmer through the large room, where there was no sign of life.

By midnight few people were on the street. Occasionally a belated pedestrian hurried past, while the policeman or watchman assumed a more deliberate gait. Oakdale was a quiet, orderly town.

Had any one been curious enough to scrutinise the different individuals who moved in front of Jim Winters's office, he would have noted several interesting facts. Mr. Jared Y. Vernon sauntered by several times, now and then on the opposite side, but frequently he passed directly in front of the office. Without seeming to do so, he glanced into the dimly lighted room, but did not pause or slacken his footsteps. That was liable to attract the attention of the watchman or of the policeman who occasionally showed himself.

Another person was similarly engaged with Mr. Vernon. He was not so tall, and wore a short garment buttoned closely about his stocky figure.

His hands were thrust into his coat pockets, and his slouch hat was pulled down over his eyes, so that if any one encountered him under the glare of a street lamp, not enough of the stranger's countenance would have been seen to identify him when the sun was shining.

As a rule, when this man and Vernon met, they did not speak or show any sign of recognition.

And yet they were partners in evil doing, and were arranging at that very hour to do something the penalty for which was a long term in the penitentiary.

After the town clock had finished its slow booming of midnight, the two men prepared for business. When next they met on the same side of the street, a few words were exchanged in low tones, without either slackening his pace.

"The coast seems clear," remarked Vernon.

"So it is," replied the other.

"Sure that no one suspects anything?"

"Dead sure."

"Then I'll fetch it next time."

Instead of walking past the door leading to Jim Winters's outer office as he had been doing through the evening, Jared Vernon, with the same regular pace, stepped upon the broad, flat stone, and, as if it were high noon and he were attached to the building, he inserted a skeleton key, unlocked the door, and passed inside. With the same regu-

lar, measured step he walked to the rear of the large front room and applied another key to the door opening into the inner office. To his surprise, it was unlocked, and the next moment he entered the adjoining apartment.

"I understood the meaning of that young man's glance at the paper in his desk," chuckled Jared Y. Vernon; "while he wouldn't hand me the paper, nor tell me what was in it, he was willing to leave it where I could lay my hands on it, when no one was watching. He would have been a fool to let such a chance pass for earning twenty thousand dollars."

All was darkness in the room in which he now stood, but during the brief spell he had spent in arranging matters with Jim Winters, Vernon impressed the whole place upon his memory as fixedly as it was upon the senses of the young man who had come in and gone out for years.

The prowler had matches in his pocket, but feared to light one of them. The curtains of the rear windows were drawn up, letting in the starlight, and there was no saying whose eyes might be turned in that direction at that moment. The risk was too great to assume unless there was real necessity for it.

With one hand extended in front of him to guard against obstructions, he picked his way with the noiselessness of a shadow across the floor in

the direction of the desk. He was not disappointed when he laid his hand on the curving cover and found it unlocked. After leaving the door to this room unfastened, it would have been absurd to cause any difficulty with the desk itself.

When the craven had proceeded thus far, he drew out a match and struck it on the sole of his shoe. It was easy now to shade the tiny twist of flame, so that the chances of its being seen from the outside were reduced to the minimum. But all he wished was to make sure that he secured the right paper.

His heart gave a quick throb, for there it lay right before him. It had occupied one of the small apartments by itself, so that it was impossible for the man to make any blunder.

With a whiff he extinguished the match, and threw the expiring fragment of wood on the carpet. Then he extended his tremulous hand, drew the precious document from its place, and thrust it into his inner pocket.

“It’s the paper the young man intended for me,” was the thrilling thought of Vernon, as he began groping his way toward the street. In the outer room he paused to listen for a signal from his confederate, who was stationed there to warn him of danger, but nothing except the usual sounds of the night fell upon his ear. All was well.

With a quiet deftness suggesting that this was not the first time he had been engaged in such business, Vernon passed out of the front door and moved at a brisk walk up the street. At the first corner he heard hurrying footsteps behind him and decreased his own pace until the other joined him. There was no risk now in the two walking to the hotel side by side.

"What luck?" asked the other, in a low voice, his eagerness partly overcoming his habitual caution.

"I've got the paper."

"Good! did you leave the money?"

"Not much; we must first find out whether this is genuine or a fake."

"How?"

"Wait till the chancellor reads his decision; if it agrees with what I have in my pocket, why, we'll think over the plan of making the verdant young man a present. Perhaps we may decide, Bill, to scale it down somewhat."

"Shouldn't wonder. Possibly we'll forget all about it, eh?"

"Stranger things have happened; what can he do to help himself?"

"Kick himself for being such an idiot. That's all that will be left for him to do; he ought to have taken the money when it was offered him; but," added Bill, "it seems odd to me that he

should prefer to let you carry away the regular decision of the chancellor ; how will he account for its disappearance ? ”

“ He won’t try to account for it ; it won’t be necessary ; he can write out another from the data that furnished this, and no one will be the wiser.”

“ I have been wondering whether he didn’t leave that paper there, expecting that you would sneak in just as you have done, read it over carefully, so as to make sure what it was, and then replace it in his desk.”

“ It may be ; probably he expected that I would also leave the twenty thousand dollars where he could put his hand on it in the morning ; if he does, he’ll be disappointed, but I say, Bill, if you think it best, I’ll go back and slip the document in the desk where I found it,—that is, after we have examined it.”

“ It strikes me that that will be the best thing to do, since I am sure he looks for something of the kind.”

“ How like a fool he acted from the first ! ” exclaimed Vernon, disgusted even in his elation of spirits ; “ the whole thing might have been settled by his handing me the paper to read. It wouldn’t have taken more than a minute or two. Finally, as I explained to you, I gave him the chance of earning the money by a wink of his eye ;

it would have been the most valuable wink I ever heard of."

"It was so valuable that he tried to earn a double fee by winking both eyes."

"And thereby earned none; but here we are!"

They entered the Oakdale House and ascended to their room, carefully avoiding any exhibition of their exuberant spirits. Men in their situation are sensitive about attracting attention to themselves.

Finally they passed into their own private apartment, locked the door behind them, and turned up the gas.

"Read it out," said the one called Bill, as he lit a cigar and flung himself on the bed; "let's have the whole thing from the beginning. It won't do to spring it on to a fellow too suddenly — what's the matter?"

Jared Y. Vernon had uttered a savage exclamation, for, after opening the folded paper with trembling fingers, he saw at a glance every word that it contained. It was this: "*What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?*"

Now I hope that none of my readers has thought for a moment that Jim Winters dallied with temptation, for, truth to say, there never was an instant when he felt inclined to betray the confidence of Vice-chancellor Whiteley, by helping a

scoundrel to defraud his fellow men, and incidentally to place a fortune in the hands of the betrayer.

The second that it became clear to Jim what the real purpose of Jared Y. Vernon was, he decided to do one of three things : take the presumptuous miscreant by the neck and kick him into the middle of the street, give him a scathing denunciation and moral lecture, or play the trick upon him that has just been described. He was inclined to the first, but shrank from the flurry and questioning it was sure to cause ; the second he felt would be useless because it would be thrown away.

"It must be," he said, in narrating the incident to his father and mother after reaching home (and they were the only ones to whom he told it), "that there is something in my appearance that suggests I am a sneak."

"Why do you say that ?" asked his mother.

"Because I have been approached so many times by rogues who must have fancied me ready to fall in with their schemes."

"No doubt most men placed in similar situations to you," remarked his father, "have been approached in the same manner ; some of them have yielded, too."

"And more have not," said Jim, stoutly ; "I saw considerable dishonesty when in the legislature, but there were also plenty of honest and incor-

ruptible men there. I shall not lose my faith in human nature because of my own experience."

The next morning Jim returned to Oakdale early. Almost the first man he met on the street was Jared Y. Vernon, who, with his companion, was hurrying to the railway station.

"I say, Mr. Vernon, I hope you found the paper I left for you," called Jim.

The man turned his scowling face toward him, hesitated for a minute, and made a fierce reply. Jim did not catch the words, and perhaps it is as well he did not.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER

THE Reverend Richard Hull, his wife, and little daughter were making their annual visit of several weeks' duration to the old homestead at Midvale. Jim Winters hurried from his office, so as to spend as much time as possible with the folks. It was at the first reunion in the evening that Jennie was seated on her brother's knee, the frail, smiling mother on the broad lap of her husband, while the young dominie was petting the little girl that had come to brighten their home after the departure of the boy that had gone on before.

It was at this happy assemblage that Jim made known the secret he had been saving for the occasion: he was engaged in marriage to Nellie Whiteley, the only daughter of Vice-chancellor Whiteley, and the former intimate companion of Jennie Hull.

"Good!" exclaimed the impulsive Jennie, flinging her arms about the neck of her brother; "there is nothing you could tell me that could give me

more pleasure ; Nellie is one of the best girls that ever lived."

"That has been my opinion for a long time."

The parents joined in their congratulations and the young clergyman gravely remarked :

"It lifts a great load from my mind ; there is hope now that Jim will give over his reckless ways, cease sowing his wild oats, and become a staid, respectable citizen."

"There is a little joke connected with my engagement," said Jim ; "the judge has intimated to me several times that it was time I thought of marriage, and last week he came into my private office and talked long and seriously over the matter. He insisted that I had reached the age when a good wife is indispensable, that my life would be incomplete without such a boon, and that I owed it to myself not to postpone the important matter. I replied that I fully agreed with him ; that I had won the love of a most estimable young woman, and all that was lacking was the consent of her father.

"'I am glad to hear that,' he said, heartily ; 'I am sure that no parent who knows you will withhold his consent.'

"'You are sure of that?' I asked, without a smile.

"'Sure of it ! Of course I am, unless you have selected the daughter of some stupid old curmud-

geon who doesn't know how to appreciate worth in a young man.'

"I don't think your description will apply to the father of the young woman whom I love with my whole heart, for he is Vice-chancellor Whiteley, and the lady herself is his only daughter Nellie."

"Well," added Jim, with a burst of laughter, "you ought to have seen the judge; Nellie and I had kept our secret so well that he had not the remotest suspicion of the state of affairs. He stared at me for a moment in mute amazement. Then when he could command his feelings, he asked, in a faint voice, 'Is this so?'

"I assure you it is," I replied; "we are waiting until you give your consent to become engaged."

"What a blind old idiot I have been," he said; "I never dreamed of anything of the kind. I hate to lose Nellie, but I suppose it will have to come sooner or later. I can truly say that there is no one to whom I should surrender her with more pleasure and assurance of her happiness than to yourself."

"And so the whole matter was arranged. It was agreed to keep it to ourselves until you came, when I was to make it known at the family council."

"Have you settled your future arrangements?" asked Dick. "I mean as to how you will live."

"You know that the judge has been a widower

for a number of years and is so old that he will never marry again. Nellie is his only child. He is in poor circumstances, for he never knew how to save money, and what little they have is due to Nellie's foresight. We have selected a comfortable house in Oakdale, to rent ; it is roomy enough to contain you all when you come to see us, and there we three shall live together. No one beside myself can know the advantage I have received in my profession from being associated with the judge. There is not an abler man on the bench, and he takes delight in coaching me. His continual presence in the household, when not absent on duty, will be still more valuable. Besides, he is so wrapped up in Nellie, that he could never be happy in living apart from her. So you see the arrangement is the best in every respect."

It has been said in a previous chapter that there were no secrets in the Winters household, but it began to look as if something of that nature had now invaded the home. Jim several times caught his parents and Jennie and Dick whispering together. He noticed that when he made his appearance, the subject of conversation was abruptly changed. Once or twice, Dick Hull especially looked confused, and acted — despite his profession — as if he were carrying some guilty knowledge around with him.

More alarming still, Jim began to suspect that

Nellie Whiteley herself was one of the conspirators. She was a member of the group that he caught talking in low tones when he unexpectedly arrived at his home; she and Jennie took a number of carriage rides together, presumably for the purpose of conversing without the danger of being overheard. Sometimes Dick himself, and again Mrs. Winters, was a member of the party whose doings were impenetrable to Jim.

"Something is in the wind," he mused, when he caught sight of Jennie and Nellie on the other side of the street from his office, so intent upon each other's words that they did not notice him. "I'd like to know what it is, but I haven't the first suspicion. They can't keep it from me much longer, and if they don't unbosom pretty soon I'll force it out of them."

And he compressed his lips and tried to look very determined.

And yet not the slightest inkling of the momentous truth came to Jim until after his return from Niagara with his newly wedded wife. Jennie and her husband had gone home, and Jim and Nellie stopped at the parsonage to spend a few days. As they were leaving, Jennie took the hand of her brother.

"Jim," said she, looking up in his handsome, manly face, with that affectionate expression that he had seen there ever since he could remember,

"you and I have never exchanged a cross or impatient word."

"How could I be impatient with *such* a sister?" he asked, pinching her cheek, in the old familiar way.

"It was the brother as much as the sister," she replied, as the lustrous eyes moistened. "Well, here is a letter that you are not to open until you reach Oakdale. Will you promise me?"

He took the formidable document which was enclosed in a large envelope.

"My sister can make no request that her brother can refuse; I give you my promise."

"Furthermore, you will make — no — objection to — that is to — what is in that letter?"

Jim noticed that Dick, who had slipped a little to one side, was vigorously rubbing his hand over his mouth to keep it straight, and doing a good deal in the way of winking and signalling to the smiling Nellie.

"You are becoming somewhat vague, sister," said Jim; "but I assume that you wish me to promise to agree to some proposal contained in this billet-doux?"

"That's it, that's it!" exclaimed the relieved Jennie.

"It is unprofessional to accept a thing of that kind without understanding clearly what it is. All the same, you have my pledge, and now good-bye."

There were kisses and embraces all around, and two days later Jim and Nellie were in Oakdale. During their absence, the house which Jim had rented was newly furnished and put in order by his parents, with some help in the way of counsel from the judge, whose interest centred chiefly in his library. The party named was seated in this room, when Jim, wondering what could be the meaning of his sister's request, broke the seal of the big envelope. The parents of the young man and his wife knew the secret, but the judge was as much in the dark as Jim, though he had been told of the request made by the wife of Dick Hull.

The four persons, therefore, kept their eyes upon the countenance of Jim, when he carefully opened the envelope and drew out the enclosure. They saw him glance at the printing and writing which it contained; then his face flushed and he swallowed a lump in his throat. Turning over the paper several times until he could control himself, he looked up and said:

“It is a wedding present from Dick and Jennie.”

Since the previous conduct of his wife and parents, as well as the expression on their faces, showed that they understood the matter, Jim passed the document to the wondering judge. A brief examination by his experienced eye showed that the paper conveyed to James Winters and his wife a clear and unencumbered title to the house,

grounds, and furniture, which Jim hoped to own after a number of years, through close economy and application.

That was the secret which up to this time had been kept from him. It was the only present received during his life that he did not feel like refusing, even though (as in the case of the Speakership in the legislature) he had accepted something of the nature before. To have declined this handsome gift would have violated his pledge and wounded Jennie and Dick, as well as his parents and wife. There was no earthly reason why he should refuse it, and he wrote an acknowledgment to the donors, couched in such grateful and happy words that the couple were, if possible, more delighted than he.

At what point shall the story of "Our Jim" come to a conclusion? That is the question over which I have been pondering, without reaching a satisfactory solution.

Some might think it ought to continue until the death of the hero, but that is impossible, for Jim at this writing is not only alive and well, but, from his appearance, has every prospect of remaining so for a good many years to come. He is in middle life, in the prime of his splendid mental powers, and with his physical being so well preserved that few men would dare to molest him, and, if they

did, would be apt to rue the day. It looks as if greater honours and successes are awaiting Jim Winters, but, inasmuch as all of this is in the future, it is not to be supposed that the reader will be satisfied for us to stop here with a promise of continuing the narration at some indefinite time hereafter.

The novelist, after taking his hero and heroine through trials and hairbreadth escapes, generally writes "Finis," when he parts with them at the altar, but I have had no heroine in this truthful narrative; the name of Jim Winters's wife is not mentioned until the closing chapter, and then the gentle helpmate comes forward only as the other part or complement of the hero himself, while, if Jennie Hull be considered the heroine, did she not gain a husband long ago?

As I have said, Jim Winters is to-day a man in middle life, with the prospect of many years of usefulness before him, and is the father of two boys and a daughter, all bright and affectionate children. His own mother was full of years and happiness when she lay down for the last time on her bed, and with her weeping family bending over her said:

"My husband, you have never given me an unkind look; hand in hand we started up the hill together, and now as we pass down the other side and the shadows gather about me, we must unclasp

our hands and part for a time, but it shall not be for long."

"I pray that your words may prove true," murmured the husband, holding fast the frail fingers, as if he could not let them go.

"And Jim and Jennie, you have never spoken a hasty word to your father or mother or to each other, nor caused either of us a moment's pain; you have made us happy and grateful, and smoothed our last days with a joy that nothing in the world can give. Do not weep; do not mourn for me; soon we shall all be together again, where parting can never come."

The bereaved husband bore his affliction bravely. No murmur ever fell from his lips, for he was one of those homely heroes who "practised what he preached," but he was further along in years than his wife had been, and ere long he, too, lay down, and was soon laid beside the partner of his joys and griefs in the quaint old churchyard.

I have shown you Jim Winters in childhood, at school, on the playground, at college, among the lawmakers of his native State, and when well advanced on the road of his profession. I think you will admit that, in all of these places, he was manly, brave, and true.

Having reached the golden noontide of life, his character was fixed upon a rock that cannot be moved; and so it seems to me that the point has

been touched where we may bid "Our Jim" good-bye, since he and all others who travel that way which is always illuminated by the sunshine of His presence are safe and certain of the final welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THE END.

